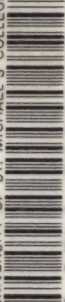


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CLERICAL STUDIES.





# CLERICAL STUDIES

BY

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## PREFACE.

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THE present volume is a re-issue, with slight alterations, of a series of articles originally printed in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*. During the course of their publication, a wish to see them, when completed, put together in book form reached the writer so frequently and from so many quarters, that he deems it only proper to act on the suggestion, and accept the gratifying assurance that, in this new and more accessible form, his observations on ecclesiastical studies will prove serviceable to a still wider circle of readers.

Those he has had chiefly in view form two classes: young men in training for the priesthood; and young priests who have gone forth, as all must do, imperfectly equipped for their work, but having it in their power, during the early years of their ministry, to make up for what is still wanting. Yet he is not without hopes that many of his remarks will prove acceptable to those of maturer years who, in the midst of their active labors, happily continue to cultivate their minds, and keep in touch with the progressive thought of the period. Indeed, it would be his wish to help in awakening a like disposition in the whole body of the clergy.

That such is also the wish of the Church nobody can doubt, if he only listens to the frequent appeals of popes and councils on this very subject. In our own time Pius IX. and Leo XIII. have again and again raised their voices, urging the bishops to watch, with untiring vigilance, over the mental and moral training of young clerics, "the future hope of the Church;" and to lift up to the highest accessible plane the intellectual as well as the spiritual life of those already invested with the priesthood.

It is in response to these pressing exhortations, as well as to a generally felt need, that the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore formulated one of its most important decrees: *De Clericorum Educatione et Instructione*, in which a broad and comprehensive plan of studies was laid down, embracing all the forms of knowledge required for a fruitful exercise of the sacred ministry, or generally included in a liberal education. This programme, promptly carried out, has already borne much fruit. The present work is meant to show how, in the judgment of the writer, the various studies referred to may be pursued with greatest advantage. Leaving to others what concerns the earlier or classical course, he takes up in succession the different subjects taught in our seminaries, not for the purpose of treating of them in any degree, but only to determine their object, to point out their practical value, and, through a knowledge of their nature, to reach the methods by which they may be most intelligently and profitably studied.

In connection with most of the subjects a certain number of books were originally mentioned, and it might have



seemed natural on the present occasion to add to the list. Nothing indeed would have been easier; but tastes are so different and so variable, and books themselves — even the best at a given time — are so quickly superseded by others more complete, or more accurate, or more in harmony with the general progress of thought, that it has been deemed wiser to add no new names to those already mentioned.

It will doubtless be found that much more work is mapped out in the present book than can be compassed by any single student. But this is done on the understanding that, while, of all the subjects dealt with, there is not one with which the priest may remain entirely unacquainted, there are but a few of which he is bound to have a thorough knowledge. To cultivate the others is simply recommended as desirable, and consequently to be pursued, now in one direction, now in another, according to the diverse duties, tastes, and opportunities of each individual. In this way the strict requirements of the ministry remain limited enough, and well within the reach of ordinary diligence and ability.

In reality there is room, even in the busy existence of a priest, for much more serious study than is commonly thought. Many things in his daily life need take less time than is given them; while others which, at first sight, seem beyond reach, by steady effort may be brought nearer and nearer, and finally become a part of his ordinary mental occupations. Let our young priests only try, and many will soon find how much more they can do than they have been doing. Day after day they will feel their powers expand

with the effort; the effort itself will assume a positive charm; and ever-growing, varied knowledge will become one of the happy necessities of their existence, bringing with it inexhaustible enjoyment, perennial freshness of mind, dignity of life, and a power every day greater to be useful to others.

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# CLERICAL STUDIES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *THE NATURAL SCIENCES.*

THE subjects of study prescribed for clerics by the Plenary Council of Baltimore are, as might be expected, principally of what may be called a professional kind. But even these are supposed to rest on the solid basis of a broad general culture, and, besides, they branch out, of themselves, into many adjacent fields of knowledge. It is in this way that we find the Natural Sciences occupying a conspicuous place in the Clerical Programme.<sup>1</sup> The importance thus attached to them is a matter of surprise to many. Even among the candidates for the priesthood, it is not uncommon to find some who lend themselves reluctantly to such studies, considering the time devoted to them as lost to other subjects which would be more directly and more widely profitable.

To dispel this baseless prejudice, and win the sympathies of the ecclesiastical student to the investigation of nature, it will suffice to show briefly how much he may be

<sup>1</sup> Here, and in what follows, the expression "Natural Science" is understood in its older and broader meaning, as including, not only the study of organized bodies, their development and laws, but also that of inanimate things, now more commonly called physical science.



benefited by cultivating this manner of knowledge, and of what importance it has been at all times in the eyes of the Catholic Church.

## ARTICLE I.

### *VALUE OF THE STUDY OF NATURAL SCIENCE.*

#### I.

The Natural Sciences are a comparatively recent addition to the course of studies, in secular as well as in clerical schools. From the period of the Renaissance almost to our own times, a liberal education was understood to mean simply a classical education, that is, a study of the languages, the literature, and the history of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Even after the sciences had run their triumphal course for better than a century, they still continued to be studied and taught only as a specialty. France was the first to admit them into the common programme of her schools and colleges. Germany followed; and last of all came England. The ingenious pleadings of Huxley for the admission of science into the modern curriculum are still fresh in the minds of the present generation. How completely he and his brother scientists have won their cause with the English and American public needs not to be told. All know too how their originally modest appeals have gradually swelled into loud clamoring for an ever greater share in the training of the youthful mind. In what measure are they likely to succeed, we are not here concerned to inquire. Every additional inch of ground is warmly contested by the contending parties, and the varying terms of compromise hitherto agreed upon have much more the character of an armed truce

than of a permanent and peaceful settlement. One thing is clear: the sciences have come to stay. They are already in unquestioned possession of a place of honor and importance in all education of the day that claims to be liberal. The share allotted to them cannot diminish. It is almost sure to grow. As it is, the Natural Sciences absorb more of the intellectual activity of the age than almost all the other forms of knowledge put together. They have more wonderful things to tell. They can point to results and awaken expectations not so much as dreamt of in other pursuits. There can therefore be no question of putting them aside, any more in education than in life, and this, in the present connection, is decisive. So long as the Natural Sciences are part of a liberal education, they have to hold their place among Clerical Studies.

## II.

Nor should we wish it to be otherwise. Even if science had still to fight its way and make good its claim as a great factor in education, truth and justice should compel us to side with it. Whether science be, as claimed by Huxley, equal to literature as a means of mental discipline and culture, may be freely debated; but its great educational value cannot be questioned. Education is only the systematic expansion of the faculties, and the study of the sciences develops them all. To say nothing of mathematics, which is first to bring to the youthful mind a notion of consecutive, structural truth, and which, at all its stages, gives a sense of security and of power greater than any other form of knowledge, it is the privilege of all the Natural Sciences to strengthen and broaden the intellect. They awaken in turn and sharpen each one of the senses.

They develop the power of attention. They cure the mind of vagueness and inaccuracy. They train it to observe closely, to compare things, to remark their similarities and differences, to classify, to generalize, to conclude with caution, and always, when possible, to verify. They beget a habit of going back from effect to cause, not merely in presence of what is unusual, but in everything. In short, there is not a function of the intellect which they do not draw out and exercise. Once thoroughly awakened by them, the desire to know becomes insatiable. To seek for fresh knowledge, to observe, to question, to test, to look deeper into the things of Nature, becomes a habit and a delight. The sphere of knowledge goes on widening as of itself. To the trained vision of the scientist, every hill and vale, every rock and ridge, every leaf and flower has something to tell. The very pebbles of the wayside and the herbs of the field are laden with unsuspected indications and mysterious questionings. Physics in its various branches, chemistry, physiology, in fact all the Natural Sciences, are simply overflowing with the most stimulating and enjoyable nutriment for the mind. Each one of them brings with it a fresh, untouched treasure of truth, and becomes a new and wonderful revelation of the world to man.

And whilst his powers are being thus developed, his mind grows broader and deeper. Doubtless, even though a stranger to the sciences, a man may see much in the facts and aspects of Nature to admire and to enjoy. But how narrow, after all, how hazy and inaccurate, is his conception of the universe! How dwarfed and diminished in comparison with that of the astronomer, who sounds the depths of space, measures boundless distances, and recognizes millions of bright worlds where the naked eye can

discern nothing but a faint streak of light ! To the uninited, the earth underneath its surface is a meaningless mass ; to the geologist, it is a record of countless ages, a revelation of the strange things that lived in that distant past ; whilst each one of its strata, like the pages of a book, relates the story of its own formation and vicissitudes, as it rose above the level of the waters or lay buried in their depths.

And so it is with the other Natural Sciences. By their great and impressive facts, by their laws spreading out into countless worlds, by the bold speculations they have originated and the beautiful theories they have led to, they extend the mind in all directions, they lift it up into the highest regions of thought ; and, whilst giving it secure possession of new worlds of truth, awaken in it that noble unrest which impels it to rise higher still, and see farther, and know more. Surely this is a power which no one aspiring to a liberal culture of the mind can afford to neglect.

### III.

Least of all can it be set aside by the future defender of the Christian faith. For science is the ground on which many of its battles are being, and will continue to be, fought ; and the first duty of a leader is to reconnoitre the battlefield, to ascertain the positions of advantage, and see how they may be captured and kept. In other words, the Christian apologist has to know the bearings of science on faith, their points of contact, few or many, real or imaginary. He must know what is strong and what is weak in the positions of the enemy and in his own. And although he may not be capable of forging new weapons, or of giving the old ones a keener edge, yet he must know how to



grasp and wield them. But all this requires training, and training here means the study of the Natural Sciences. He who remains a stranger to them may keep his own faith safe enough by not heeding or not realizing what is objected. But he cannot be helpful to those who are alive to such difficulties. Scientific objections have to be met on scientific grounds; and those who venture on the latter unprepared only succeed in confirming in their error the minds they should have led back to the truth.

#### IV.

But there are many other ways in which the Catholic priest will find a knowledge of Natural Science most helpful. Scarce has he gone forth to his work, when he finds it appealed to on all sides, — in the schools, of which he becomes the visitor, the examiner, sometimes the teacher; on boards of education, of hygiene, of sanitation, where he appears as a petitioner or sits as a member; in numberless questions of local interest which depend ultimately on scientific principles. A true mastery of them is in such cases invaluable. It goes farther to give credit to the man and weight to his words than any other form of knowledge. And then it multiplies the points of contact with his fellow-men. For one who is able or cares to discuss questions of philosophy or history, twenty will be found willing to talk of science, discoveries, inventions. Again, the priest, when well based in the elements of Natural Science, keeps pace with its progress. He appreciates and can point out to others the importance of each step in advance; he follows with interest the controversies that arise among scientists. He enjoys the articles of journal or magazine by which the public is put in possession of new discoveries. Even his

sermons borrow happy illustrations from the familiar fields of science, and, like the exiled duke of Shakespeare, he —

“Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

As a fact, no form of religious discourse is more welcome to the modern mind than that which gathers tone and color from the facts and laws of Nature. These indeed, in their most obvious shapes, have been appealed to from the times of the Gospel down to the present day without losing aught of their freshness or power. But in the forms of modern science, they exercise a still greater attraction, especially on those who have in any degree been instructed in them.

For a priest, of course, there can be no question of taking up all, far less of mastering them. Their unceasing, enormous growth renders such a thing impossible even to those who devote their whole life to such studies. But a proper selection may be made, and such as are chosen may be judiciously distributed through the various stages of the educational course. Far from being detrimental to the other studies, they will be positively helpful. As regards the objects to choose, the most important seem, by common consent, to be: the planet which we inhabit, and its great physical and chemical laws; the vast universe, of which our earth is only an insignificant portion; the human body, as the highest form of life and the best exemplification of its laws, — in a word, the elements of physics, of chemistry, of astronomy, and of physiology. Some knowledge of all these is implied in the study of geology, a subject which for many years has attracted the special attention of clerics, on account of its supposed bearing on revealed truth, and, if possible, should not be neglected.

But, though early accessible, such studies should not be taken up too soon. It is a mistaken, not to say a positively mischievous, notion, to teach science to children. Science is not for children. True, they are extremely eager to know, but their curiosity is entirely superficial. What they long for and rejoice in is, not laws, nor rules, nor classifications, but realities, facts, strange and striking, upon which the fancy may feed. That delightful haze which envelops Nature in the mind of the child is its most congenial atmosphere. Only there does its susceptible and curiously creative imagination find free play. Wonderland, not science, is its natural dwelling-place. Science, so far as realized, only breaks the spell and dries up, maybe for life, the springs of poetic feeling in the child, despoiling it, for the sake of a little precocious, and to it, almost meaningless, information, of the chief beauty and attractiveness of that early age. Flowers, not botany, insects, not entomology — the wonders of Nature, not her laws, should be revealed to the opening mind.

The age best fitted, perhaps, for acquiring the elements of the Natural Sciences is from fourteen to eighteen. There is in the intellectual development habitually corresponding to that age a peculiar eagerness to see into the secrets of Nature. The mind has become capable of realizing general principles and laws, whilst the memory still retains all its freshness. The higher principles, the more advanced and complicated problems, the general theories, as well as the mutual relations of the different sciences, require more maturity of mind. They constitute the philosophy of the sciences, and the most suitable place for so much of them as can be mastered is alongside philosophy proper.

But at whatever time or to whatever extent they may be

studied, it should be, first of all, with a constant view to clearness of conception and accuracy of statement. Confused or inaccurate knowledge is worse than useless. It is misleading, and weakens the mind instead of strengthening it. Next, the student should not be concerned to master the numberless details of the sciences, but rather their main lines, their fundamental laws or principles, their processes and methods.

Still more should it be the object of the teacher to place all these features in strong relief, and thus to impress them deeply on the minds of his pupils. In nothing is the difference between a strong and a weak professor more visible than in the degree of distinctness, order, and depth of the impressions he leaves on his hearers.

But the student must be more than a hearer. He must see. His conceptions must be helped out and fixed by drawings, specimens, experiments. He must handle, test, verify by himself, as much as possible. Nothing is equal to that direct contact with the objects and facts of Nature. What has thus been learned is never entirely forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

## ARTICLE II.

### *THE CHURCH AND NATURAL SCIENCE.*

The share of the Catholic Church, through her clergy and her religious orders, in preserving and propagating various other forms of knowledge, is generally recognized

<sup>1</sup> In surveying the contents of some clerical libraries, we have noticed more than once what might be called a science section in them, — manuals of science, popular presentations, — sometimes the latest and best text-books, showing that the owners, whilst mainly occupied with other thoughts and things, realized the help they would continue to find in a deeper knowledge of Nature. We sincerely wish that they may find an ever-increasing number of imitators in the ranks of the clergy.



by all those who have studied, even superficially, the history of civilization. But her active interest and helpfulness in the advancement of the Natural Sciences is less known. The common belief of ignorant or half-educated Protestants in this country seems to be that, in some mysterious way, modern science is destructive of Catholic belief, and that the Church, with the instinct of self-preservation, keeps it back as much as possible from her children, or allows it to reach them only stunted and distorted. It has been seriously asked of the present writer, by a Protestant who considered himself enlightened, what sort of science could be taught in a Catholic University! Such silly conceptions, it is true, are met with only outside the Church; but how often her children, and even her priests, remain unacquainted with all that is due to her of that science of which the present age is so justly proud! And this is to us an additional motive to recall something of it briefly in the present connection.

## I.

The expansion of the Natural Sciences is mainly confined to the two or three last centuries. Yet the questionings of mind in presence of the visible world are as old as man himself. They give its earliest form to Greek philosophy, and we meet them repeatedly in the Bible. But the answer to them was slow to come, and, when heard, it proved in many ways unreliable,—a medley of facts and fancies,—conjectures built upon as solid realities, and authority or abstract principle doing duty for the slower but only sure method of observation and induction. Still, notwithstanding the imperfection of their methods, the ancients had accumulated a vast collection of data, and

deduced from them laws and principles which the subsequent advances of science have left untouched. The mechanics of Archimedes, so far as it goes, is not different from ours. The theorems of Euclid are the foundation of our geometry. The aphorisms of Hippocrates are still quoted by our physicians. Ptolemy is reverently looked back to by astronomers, Dioscorides by botanists, Pliny by naturalists; whilst Aristotle remains the wonder of all times, by the variety, the sagacity, the originality of his observations in the realm of visible Nature, no less than in the higher regions of thought.

History tells us how this great scientific movement, essentially Greek in its origin and spirit, was arrested in its development by a series of political changes, principally by the Roman conquest; and how it utterly disappeared amidst the confusion and accumulated ruins of the barbarian invasions. But history tells us, too, where what remained of science found a refuge; how the Church, like the ark of old on the waters of the deluge, gathered up and preserved for future ages the living thoughts of the past. For, although her mind was turned to the things of the unseen world more than to those of Nature, yet scientific truths of all kinds never ceased to be attractive to her. Thus we find them eagerly sought for and constantly imparted in monastery and cathedral schools all through the Middle Ages. This is freely admitted by Hallam, and by other Protestant historians. In his *History of the Inductive Sciences*, Dr. Whewell quotes approvingly the remarks of Montucla: "It is impossible not to reflect that all those men, who, if they did not augment the treasure of the sciences, at least served to transmit it, were monks, or had been so originally. Convents were, during these stormy ages, the asylum of science and letters. Without

these religious men, who in the silence of their monastery occupied themselves in transcribing, in studying, in imitating the works of the ancients, well or ill, those works would have perished; perhaps not one of them would have come down to us. The thread which connects us with the Greeks and the Romans would have been snapped asunder; the precious productions of ancient literature would no more exist for us; in the sciences we should have had all to create; and at the moment the human mind should have emerged from its torpor and shaken off its slumbers, we should have been no more advanced than the Greeks were after the taking of Troy.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Whewell adds, “It was natural that men who lived a life of quiet and study, and were necessarily in a great measure removed from the absorbing and blinding interests with which practical life occupies the thoughts, should cultivate science more successfully than others, precisely because their ideas on speculative subjects had time and opportunity to become clear and steady.”

Thus, then, an elementary knowledge of the sciences was, even in these times, for monk and cleric, not the exception, but the rule. Of the seven liberal arts, four were distinctly scientific: music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy; and Rabanus Maurus, in the ninth century, sets them all down as an integral part of the clerical programme.<sup>2</sup>

In the works of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, from S. Augustine down to the thirteenth century, the reader is constantly lighting on short treatises, embodying the elements of one or other of the Natural Sciences. S. Isidore of Seville (seventh century) wrote a whole ency-

<sup>1</sup> Whewell, *History of Inductive Sciences*, B. IV., c. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *De Institutione Clericorum*, C. 18, et seq.

cllopedia, summing up what could be gathered from the ancients on all manner of subjects. The same feat was repeated in the thirteenth century by the Dominican, Vincent de Beauvais, in his colossal *speculum*, one of its four sections being entirely devoted to Natural Science.

Meanwhile the works of Aristotle, almost unknown in the Latin Church for several centuries, came again to light, and awakened universal enthusiasm. Not only his metaphysical and moral writings, but his treatises on Natural Science were eagerly studied. From that date, instead of the short, elementary writings of the previous period, we have before us large tomes containing the elaborate attempts of the schoolmen to solve the mysteries of Nature. Two folios of Albertus Magnus, the teacher of S. Thomas, are devoted to problems of all kinds such as are handled by the scientists of to-day. S. Thomas himself wrote abundant commentaries on the *Physics* of Aristotle, and constantly refers to his principles, even when dealing with theological subjects, in order, as it were, to teach all succeeding ages that the science of the unseen, in its highest forms, can ill dispense with a knowledge of the facts and laws of the visible world.

During the Middle Ages, it is true, Natural Science was little, if at all, progressive. Mental activity flowed in other channels, and Bacon and Descartes had not yet appeared to reveal the true methods of scientific investigation. But whatever anticipation of them is to be found in that period belongs almost exclusively to the Catholic clergy. It is a remarkable fact that of the three men who stand out in bold relief, in mediæval times, and are honored to-day as the great precursors of modern science, one was a pope, another a cardinal, and the third a Franciscan friar. Before he was raised to the chair of Peter, under the name of Syl-



vester II. (999), Gerbert, the Benedictine monk, was the wonder of his age. Having assimilated all the knowledge he could find in France, his native country, he visited the Arabs of Spain, then at the zenith of their power and of their proficiency in Natural Science, studied at their schools, and, on his return, enriched the Northern nations with the knowledge thus won as well as with his own inventions and discoveries.

Nicholas, Cardinal de Cusa, Oriental scholar, theologian, statesman, was at the same time the most original physicist of his day. As for Roger Bacon, it is enough to say that, by the universality of his knowledge, the boldness of his speculations, the novelty and truth of his methods of investigation, the monk of the thirteenth century stands, in the eyes of many of our contemporary scientists, on almost as high a level as his great namesake of the Elizabethan age.

## II.

The mention of Francis Bacon brings us to the last, and beyond comparison the most brilliant, period of human investigation and discovery. It is true that, from the Renaissance down, the clergy ceases to hold the monopoly of learning. Many of the new sciences naturally fall into the hands of professional men, such as physicians, chemists, engineers, and the like. But the clergy remains a stranger to none, and the names of distinguished priests may be constantly met among the great inventors and discoverers of the modern scientific era.

Thus, the father of modern astronomy, Copernicus, was canon of the Cathedral of Frauenburg, dividing his hours between prayer, works of charity, and scientific research. Gassendi, another canon, was one of the greatest astrono-

mers and mathematicians of the seventeenth century. Indeed, astronomy has had a sort of natural attraction for clerics at all times; and it may be remarked that, from Copernicus down to the celebrated Jesuit astronomer and general scientist of our day, F. Secchi, at no time was that noble and elevating science without some eminent representatives among the clergy. Abbé Picard, to whose labors Newton was so deeply indebted, was the first president of the French "Académie des Sciences." He taught astronomy in the famous "College de France," and had for many years a preponderant share in the practical work carried out in connection with his favorite science. Later on, its most conspicuous representative in France was Abbé Lacaille, whose charts and catalogues of the Northern and Southern skies were considered one of the noblest astronomical achievements of the eighteenth century. The most popular professor of physics of that same period was again a clergyman, Abbé Nollet. So, later on, was Haüy, the greatest mineralogist of his day, and the creator, it may be said, of the new science of crystallography, upon which mineralogy, since then, has mainly rested. To the clergy, again, Italy is indebted for one of her greatest naturalists, Spallanzani; while France, at the same time, had reason to be proud of the celebrated discoverer and physicist, Abbé Mariotte.

These are only individual instances. To form an adequate conception of the important share taken by the clergy in the advancement of the sciences during the last three centuries, one must take up a detailed history of each of them. Scarcely one could be named that is not under obligation to the clerical body for some valuable addition, whilst to many they continued long to be the principal contributors.

This is especially true of geography, ethnology, and natural history in its various departments. To these sciences, essentially dependent on observations made directly in every part of the world, the missionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rendered invaluable services. They were all men of education, a large number of them men of exceptional culture. Whilst their hearts were set on the salvation of souls, their trained senses were constantly open to the strange aspects and objects of Nature in the unknown regions to which they carried the Gospel; and, from every part of the world hitherto unexplored, they supplied the various centres of civilization with facts carefully observed, with maps, descriptions, and specimens of the fauna and flora of each country. They were the regular and most valued correspondents of the learned societies of Europe. Among the latter, the French Academy of Sciences owed them sometimes more than it cared to acknowledge. Itself, the highest among the learned bodies of the period, always reckoned ecclesiastics among its prominent members. Its first president, Picard, was a priest; its first perpetual secretary, "the modest and learned" Abbé Duhamel, as he is styled by the recent historian of the academy, was also a cleric. Priests we find among those selected for every scientific expedition of the century, as F. Perry, S. J., has been more than once in our own times by the British government. The same remark may be made of the learned bodies of the other Catholic countries of Europe. Some of their most prominent members were invariably recruited among the religious orders or the leisured members of the secular clergy.

The lively interest and active share taken by the clergy, secular and regular, in the advancement of the sciences, has been recently brought to light in an unexpected way,

by the published correspondence of the great scientists of the past, Galileo, Descartes, Leibnitz, and others. It becomes clear that none watched more eagerly than their clerical friends the fruitful labors of these great men, or were more ready to help them. Galileo, for instance, was in constant relation with the Jesuits in charge of the Roman Observatory. Between Descartes and F. Mersenne, his schoolmate and fast friend,—considered by many as the founder of acoustics,—there was an unbroken exchange of observations and views indicative of a genuine feeling of intellectual brotherhood between them. As for Leibnitz, it has been long known that much—not to say most—of his scientific correspondence was exchanged with religious, or with secular clergymen.

The history of the religious orders strongly emphasizes the same conclusion. Ever conspicuous in their zeal for the advancement of learning, they have all had a share in the conquests of modern science. The Society of Jesus in particular presents a magnificent record. Even if the Catholic Church had nothing to show in the investigation of Nature, for the last three centuries, beyond the labors of this great Society, she might still be proud of her work. Whilst the Dominicans, the Benedictines, the Oratorians, and other religious bodies resuscitated the past in those works of wide erudition and marvelous critical skill, to which each succeeding generation of scholars pays fresh and unstinted homage, the Society of Jesus devoted itself in a special manner to that form of knowledge which was to captivate the thoughts and energies of the future. From the very inception of the order, mathematics took their place side by side with philosophy and theology. In the Roman College, whose undiminished fame, for better than



two hundred years, was entirely due to the Society, the university emblem represented theology as assisted by mathematics on one side and physics on the other. Mathematical astronomy seems to have been one of their favorite pursuits. There were few colleges of the Jesuits, says Montucla, in Germany and the neighboring countries, which had not an observatory. Not long before the suppression of the order, a number of Jesuits were engaged in the direction of observatories at Würzburg, Vienna, Florence, Venice, etc. In the museum of Georgetown College may be still seen the gold medal, struck by the order of the King of Sweden to commemorate F. de Vico's discovery of six comets. On setting out for the Chinese Empire, the Jesuit missionaries were frequently honored with the fellowship of the French Academy of Sciences, and continued the interesting series of their scientific reports, whilst they enjoyed the dignity of high mandarins in the Celestial Empire.

We must confine ourselves here to this bare outline. A whole volume would be needed to do full justice to the subject. But enough has been said to dispose of the notion, so sedulously propagated among our contemporaries, that the representatives of Christianity have been always unfriendly to science, and that if the modern mind has made such gigantic strides in the knowledge of nature, it is because it has escaped from the thralldom of ecclesiastical authority and priestly dictation. That religious men may have occasionally taken too narrow a view of Christian doctrine, and been unduly alarmed at the claims of science, we readily allow. But we would observe first, that the remark, in so far as it is true, applies much more to Protestant than to Catholic theologians; secondly, that no interference of the Catholic Church can be pointed to

which has, to any considerable extent, impeded or stayed the advancement of science. Even the celebrated case of Galileo, if viewed fairly, will hardly form an exception to the rule.

If, during the present century, the Catholic clergy has not taken so active a share in the study of Nature as in the past, the reason must be sought for in the political and social changes which, at the close of the last century, originated in France, and from there extended to the rest of Europe. After the great storm had subsided, the French clergy reappeared, diminished in numbers, despoiled of its principal resources, with a vast population still Catholic and craving for the essential helps of Catholic life. What could priests do but rush to their assistance, and relinquish all thought of higher culture in their devotion to such pressing needs?

Now, this condition of things has remained substantially unaltered down to the present day. At no time during the nineteenth century has the French clergy had a leisured class, as in the past, free to devote itself to scientific research; and this is still more obviously true of the Catholic clergy in the United States, and indeed in all English-speaking countries. In nations, such as Italy, Germany, and Spain, less deeply disturbed by the great Revolution, there may have been more room for such studies; but others having a closer connection with religion were naturally preferred. Yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that anywhere the clergy have become strangers to Natural Science. At the present day there is scarcely a country in which distinguished representatives of that form of knowledge may not be found among the clergy, secular and regular. Their number is fast increasing, even in this country, where so few can find time for such pur-

suits. The new Faculty of Philosophy recently inaugurated in the Catholic University of Washington has already given a powerful impetus in this direction, and the whole body of the clergy is becoming more keenly alive to the fact, that, if knowledge is power, the knowledge of Nature is preëminently so, and that it would be a fatal mistake to leave it exclusively in the hands of enemy or stranger.

## CHAPTER II.

*PHILOSOPHY.*

DURING the whole course of the present century, the principal field of human investigation has been the visible world. Eagerly, yet patiently and methodically questioned, it has yielded up, one after another, its wonderful secrets, investing man with new and almost limitless powers, and giving him over Nature a kingship unknown since the Fall. It is only natural that the inventions and discoveries which have so marvelously transformed and expanded human life should stand high in the estimation of our contemporaries. As a fact, science is the idol of the day, and whoever possesses in any special degree a portion of its magic power is sure to receive a corresponding share of the popular worship.

Yet science is not the greatest power in this world. Deeper and more wide-reaching still in its action is Thought — that manner and form of thought which bears the name of Philosophy.

## ARTICLE I.

*THE MEANING AND VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY.*

## I.

By Philosophy we mean here what is commonly understood by that name. Definitions we have already by the score, and it would serve no purpose to add one more



to their number. The fact of there being so many only proves the great variety of meanings which have come to be attached to the term. In the course of ages it has covered, sometimes a wider, sometimes a narrower field. A time was when it embraced all knowledge, except of the commonest kind. But by little and little many of the objects which it originally embodied grew into prominence and assumed an individual existence, with distinctive names. Just as, in the history of art, we see the sculptured figures gradually stand out in bolder relief and become independent statues; or the mural paintings, long spread over the walls of temple or palace, drop, as it were, from them one day and become movable pictures; in the same way, in the course of ages, now one, now another of the sciences detaches itself from the common parent; mathematics first, then astronomy — much later, almost in our own times, — the different natural sciences. But they left behind them the general notions and higher principles from which they proceed, in common with all other forms of human knowledge, and which, brought together and systematized, present a special and more exalted sort of science — behind and beyond Nature — which we call *Metaphysics*. There remain, besides, the science of the human faculties, or *Psychology*; the laws of thought, which are treated in *Logic*; the laws of human action, treated in *Ethics*; to which have been added, in modern times, the laws of the beautiful, as the subject matter of *Æsthetics*. All these, kept together, retain the traditional name of Philosophy.

It may be fairly questioned whether there exists between them a sufficiently close connection to gather them all under a single denomination. A conception which aims at embracing things so unlike has always something

artificial and strained about it. Psychology is as much a distinct science as physiology. Logic has as independent an existence as algebra. Æsthetics and ethics develop side by side without interference — almost without contact. Perhaps it might be said that Philosophy, as commonly understood, represents, like our knowledge of Nature, a group of sciences rather than a unit among them. But this is of little consequence for the present, as our purpose is not to examine critically the nature and unity of Philosophy, but to call attention to its great importance as an object of study for cleric and priest, and to suggest what we consider the most practical means and methods of pursuing it usefully. In the present article we will confine ourselves to the first aspect.

The study of Philosophy may be considered

As a means of culture ;

As a source of influence ;

As a necessary key to the science of theology.

## II.

To begin with the last, as the most direct and practical aspect of the question, we may state the case in a single short sentence. Philosophy is not merely an easier means of access ; it is the only gateway through which the mind can get admittance to scientific theology. And the reason is obvious. Theology, as a science, owes its very existence to Philosophy. Even its definition teaches us this : "*Rerum divinarum scientia per discursum seu ratiocinationem acquisita.*" Theology is, indeed, built on revelation. But a belief in revelation rests on the existence and veracity of God, which it is the business of Philosophy to demonstrate. Again, theology is revealed truth, but de-

veloped — *treated*, as chemists would say — by philosophical methods. As it reaches us originally through the Word of God, written or unwritten, revealed truth is fragmentary and unconnected. From the pages of Sacred Writ come forth, in irregular succession, faint glimmerings of the unseen — vivid flashes of divine light — distinct doctrines — vague yet pregnant suggestions — symbols and facts full of meaning, which need to be realized. To elucidate all these; to classify, to evolve, to connect them; to convert confusing variety into unity, and, with loose and unfashioned materials dropped from heaven to earth, to raise up a structure solid and harmonious in the multiplicity of its parts, — such has been at all times the aim of theology, a task to be attempted successfully only by those who have learned to see deeply into things, and have become familiar with the evolution and coördination of truth.

And this is just the class of men who, from beginning to end, have reared the noble structure of Catholic theology, — minds trained in the schools to subtle thought, and fashioned by the discipline of philosophical studies. In the encyclical "*Æterni Patris*," Leo XIII. points out the abundant use made by the early Fathers of philosophical principles and methods to demonstrate, develop, and defend the teachings of the Christian faith. "Providence itself," he says, "requires that in bringing back nations to the faith, human science should be asked to lend its aid; and the records of antiquity attest that such was the practice of the most illustrious Fathers of the Church. The part which they were accustomed to assign to reason was neither small nor insignificant. S. Augustine sums it up concisely when he points to human science as a means by which *faith is begotten, nourished, defended, and strengthened.*" And the learned pontiff proceeds to develop the

words of the great African doctor, by showing how, as a historical fact, the greatest lights of the early Church appeal to philosophic proof whenever available, whilst exhibiting, themselves, great familiarity with the speculations of the period, as well as careful dialectical training.

The same law reasserts itself many centuries later. When Theology, after her protracted slumber, awakens to fresh life and vigor, with S. Anselm and his contemporaries, it is at the touch of philosophic thought. The great theological movement of the following century received, as is well known, its principal impulse from the introduction into the schools of the works of Aristotle. Nor was it otherwise in the third great efflorescence of theology, corresponding to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Once more its noblest representatives are invariably men of the highest philosophical powers, rich in the traditions of the schools, and familiar with the most arduous problems of abstract thought. The greatest of them all, Suarez, felt so keenly the dependence of his work as a theologian on the notions and problems of Philosophy, that, as he tells us himself in the *Proæmium* of his *Disputationes Metaphysicæ*, he was compelled to turn aside for a time from all theological research in order to elucidate them more thoroughly. To this happy necessity we owe, under the above-mentioned name, one of his greatest productions.

### III.

As only a deep philosopher can be a great theologian, so those alone who have mastered the elements of Philosophy can hope to acquire any technical knowledge of the sacred science. There is not a department of Philosophy which they have not again and again to go back to ; scarce a sin-



gle theological question that does not imply conceptions which it is the business of Philosophy to elucidate. Thus, to say nothing of the fundamental proofs of Christianity, which are all philosophical or historical, the doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, reposes on the ontological notions of essence, unity, personality, substance. The deepest problems of psychology are involved in the mystery of the Incarnation. The workings of grace can be understood only by a philosophical study of the natural man. Behind the doctrine of the Sacraments, especially of the Blessed Eucharist, we reach the problems of causality, space, matter, accidents, etc. Moral theology, from beginning to end, is based on psychology and ethics. In short, Theology in all its parts is so much of a philosophical science that it can neither be taught, nor learnt, nor even thought of with any distinctness and detail, unless through the medium of the earlier discipline.

Hence it is that they have never been separated in the Church. From the thirteenth century, in all the clerical schools and universities, wherever theology was studied, Philosophy was taught beside it. In the religious orders devoted to active work, measures were taken to secure to the aspirants a thorough philosophical training. Their constitutions and practical directions in this connection offer a very interesting subject of study, showing how fully realized was the fact we are presently concerned with, that outside a philosophical preparation no theological science can be imparted.

Finally, a priest is not only a student and exponent of the Christian faith, he is also its champion. From whatever direction it may be assailed, on him devolves the duty of defending it. Now, while it scarce can be said

that, at the present day, religious truth is safe from attack on any side, yet it is clear that some of its most dangerous enemies are to be found among the modern representatives of philosophic speculation. In former times, certain parts of the sacred structure were only in peril; in our day a determined effort is made to sap its very foundations. For religion is built on belief in a personal God, distinct from the universe, on belief in the soul, spiritual and immortal, on human liberty and responsibility. The denial of any of these truths is destructive of all faith; yet there is not one of them which is not violently assailed or contemptuously ignored amongst us. The agnostic school lays it down as a fundamental principle that such truths, even if they happen to exist, are beyond the reach of man, and can never be ascertained as we ascertain the facts and the laws of nature. Thus the whole fabric of religious belief is imperiled by men who have caught the public ear, and are listened to and trusted by countless followers.

On one ground only can they be met and defeated. Their difficulties are philosophical, they have to be met by philosophical arguments. Authority cannot be appealed to. Reason alone is recognized as the supreme arbiter, and hence the necessity of getting a firm grasp of philosophic truth. "Because," says Leo XIII. (*l. c.*), "in this age of ours Christian belief is wont to be assailed by the devices and cunning of sophistical wisdom, all our youth, but especially those who are the hope of the Church, should be nourished with that strengthening and solid meat of doctrine."

#### IV.

But the study of Philosophy is not merely a preparation for the work of apologist or theologian. It trains and

equips the mind for every kind of intellectual pursuit. It imparts the methods and principles which guide investigation in every region of human knowledge. It is, in particular, the necessary corrective of the study of the natural sciences which, when pursued exclusively, narrows the mind to one process and one form of knowledge, leaving out man, the soul, moral liberty and responsibility, eternal truth, that is, the highest objects of human thought. Philosophy brings them all back, and begets an abiding sense of their reality. As a discipline, it accustoms the mind better than aught else to distinctness and accuracy of conception. Its constant concern is to take asunder the elements of thought, to concentrate the whole attention on each one of them, and ascertain their true relations. It regulates and strengthens that unceasing play of mind by which, from every fresh element of knowledge, we are led backwards and forwards to new forms of truth. For this is the very nature of our mental activity. We observe, we compare; we reason up from facts to laws, and down from laws to new and unobserved facts. The principle of causation is so deeply imbedded in our mental structure, that we are ever striving to lift up the veil, and see what is behind each fact of nature, of history, of the human soul. The cause, — the underlying principle of things, the broader synthesis by which they are seen in their unity; facts, no longer unexplained and unconnected, but lighted up and held together by some deeper truth, — this is what the cultivated mind has ever longed for: —

*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,*

and what philosophy trains it to discover. The very pursuit is elevating; it develops the highest faculties, and,

independently of its results, it gives such keen delight that a great thinker, Malebranche, was wont to say, "If I held truth captive in my hand, I would set it free, in order that I might taste afresh the delight of pursuing and capturing it."

The pursuit yields more than enjoyment. It brings power,—power born of the pursuit, and power in each truth thus won. At no period of life is there such a conscious increase of mental vigor as in the first systematic study of Philosophy. We may compare it to the ascent of commanding heights. Each step forward enlarges the sphere of vision, and reveals new beauties to the eye, until the summit is reached, where the purer air, and brighter sky, and vaster expanse of wood and water, and cultivated field beneath thrill with delight, and lift up the whole soul. Every new law of mind or of life, every principle of higher truth, enlarges the range of mental vision, and adds, as it were, new realms to the empire of thought. Well may Cicero exclaim: "*Quid optabilius? quid præstantius? quid homine melius? quid homine dignius?*" and well may philosophers have seen in it the noblest form of human happiness, and theologians a picture of that higher contemplation in which is found the supreme beatitude of the saints in heaven

## V.

The power of Philosophy is not confined to speculation. It leads to results of the most practical kind. Of all the influences that impel the human race, after religion, Philosophy is the greatest. Human passions are strong, but their reign is short-lived. They exhaust themselves quickly, and they neutralize one another in the great struggle of life. Truth never dies. Inventors and dis-



coverers have revolutionized the conditions and habits of social life, but thinkers have acted more powerfully and more deeply still. *Mens agitat molem*. The power of science is irresistible, but it needs guidance. Thought gets hold of it, and turns it to its own purposes.

Thought, principle, truth, or what is taken for truth, all men finally appeal to and profess to follow. Individuals and nations are ever working out a theory, true or false, which they have learned, perhaps unconsciously, from some thinker. He may have been conspicuous or unknown, it matters not. Like the seed of the parables, his thought has dropped noiselessly into the minds of men, and after a time it has sprung up, and spread, and covered the land. Rousseau in his lifetime was considered by most people as only a harmless dreamer; twenty years after his death he was the inspired prophet and legislator of the French Revolution. Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, lived and died almost unknown and unnoticed; yet what a following he has had in our age! A small book of Beccaria gradually transformed the criminal laws of Europe. Gioberti's *Rinnovamento* had at least as much to do with the unification of Italy as Cavour's deep and unscrupulous diplomacy or Garibaldi's armed bands. At the present day, the legislation of almost every country in the world is being slowly but steadily modified under the action of philosophical views. Who, again, can question the influence of the theories of heredity, of determinism, of evolution on our whole administration of justice? Who can doubt the action of our new views of marriage on the domestic life, or that of Karl Marx and his school on current notions regarding private ownership? Who, having watched the course of thought in this country and in England for the last thirty years, does not see at once the deep im-

press it bears of such men as Herbert Spencer or Stuart Mill?

Thus everything tends to emphasize the fact that, taken broadly, Philosophy is at the very root of all human history and human life. But in whose possession do we find it at the present day? Often in the hands of the most incompetent—of men whose intellectual habits would least fit them for philosophical speculation. And yet they cannot keep themselves from it. Scientists, such as Huxley and Tyndall, are constantly overstepping the natural limits of their investigations, and settling dogmatically the most arduous questions of Philosophy, or unsettling the most necessary beliefs of their fellow-men. Only a short time ago, Mr. Edison, whilst claiming to be a stranger to theory and speculation, treated us to a number of views, more or less original, on the nature of matter and life. Hundreds of thousands read them in the Sunday newspapers, and doubtless adopted them, knowing no better.

For such is the condition of things to-day. Views and theories, which in former times continued to dwell on the heights where they had come to light, and percolated but slowly, if at all, through the lower strata, now permeate the social body from top to bottom almost at once. The Philosophy of yesterday is the literature of to-day. Orators, poets, writers of fiction, all those who form the public mind, seek inspiration from the thinker. A vein of Philosophy runs through most of their productions; and it may be truly said that at no period of history has speculative thought been so quickly taken up, or so widely and so rapidly propagated.

The conclusion comes forth of itself. It is the one to which our great pontiff, Leo XIII., has given the weight of his authority in the memorable encyclical referred to,

and of which the present remarks are meant to be a feeble echo. To those who have received from above the mission of diffusing salutary truth, who are, by their calling, the light of the world and the salt of the earth, it belongs, before all others, to be the intellectual guides of their fellow-men, familiar with the devious paths of error into which the unwary are so easily betrayed, and ever holding bright before them the welcome radiance of truth, both as it comes down from heaven, or as it issues forth from the depths of philosophical study.

## ARTICLE II.

### *THE ENCYCLICAL "ÆTERNI PATRIS."*

If, then, Philosophy is the necessary crowning of a liberal education; if it is the basis of all theological study; if, as embodied in, or giving birth to, theories of moral and social life, it is one of the most potent factors in human action, — the necessity is evident for the clerical student to become acquainted from the beginning with its teachings, to be fashioned by its discipline; and, later on, amidst the manifold duties of his ministry as a priest, to watch its course, and, so far as may be, to guide its action on the minds of his contemporaries.

We have now to consider how this may be best accomplished. The question is a complex one. It concerns equally the beginners and the proficient, those who teach and those who learn. It implies in some measure, besides, a choice between rival schools and methods.

In this as in all practical matters, the best guide is experience; and here experience reaches us in many ways. There is, first of all, our own experience and that of those around us who have devoted themselves to the study, —

some, in addition, to the teaching — of Philosophy. No thoughtful man can have done one or the other for any time without reaching many practical conclusions as to the most effective methods of acquiring or imparting philosophical knowledge; and we confess our readiness to attach much more importance to such experience, especially when multiplied, independent, and unprejudiced, than to rules, though ever so plausible, when they are only the outcome of *a priori* theories or principles. There is also the general experience of the human mind, as exhibited in the history of systems and methods, and more generally in the history of Philosophy.

But before presenting to the reader what may be learned in this way, it is only proper that we should listen to the directions which come to us from a source in which experience and authority meet and combine in their highest degree. We refer to the encyclical "*Æterni Patris*," published on this very subject by his present Holiness, Leo XIII., on the 4th of August, 1879. We will confine ourselves here to its principal recommendations.

First of all, we are taught in it to ENGRAFT OUR PHILOSOPHY ON THE WISDOM OF THE PAST.

*Verum ut pretiosis suis afferendis fructibus par Philosophia inveniatur, omnino oportet ut ab eo tramite nunquam deflectat quem veneranda Patrum antiquitas ingressa est.* Like all true science and art, Philosophy has, at every stage of its existence, to be built on what has gone before. Of its very nature it comes forth, not full-grown and clad in armor, like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, but slowly evolved from many minds, and shaped by the wis-



dom of ages. To depart in some particulars from such a tradition may be occasionally allowable and even necessary. It is through dissatisfaction with current solutions, arguments, and theories that men are led to seek for and to find better. Where the old rulings are never questioned, where no effort is made to look more deeply and see more accurately into the problems of thought, the mind becomes stagnant and loses all its power. Its unrest, on the contrary, is often a sign of youth and vigor—a sort of prophetic anticipation, like that of Columbus, leading to the discovery of vast and hitherto unexplored continents in the intellectual world. But to break away bodily from the past, and undertake to build up all things anew, as Descartes, Kant, and others have attempted to do, can never be wise. Still less is such a process admissible in regard to doctrines and methods long and closely wedded to revealed truth. In the Catholic Church there is necessarily a certain continuity of philosophical as well as of Christian thought, and Leo XIII. only recalls the practice of the greatest religious minds of all times when he tells us that, whilst looking around and beyond us, we have still more to look backward, and gather inspiration and guidance from the past.

## II.

The second principle laid down by the encyclical is **LOYALTY TO REVEALED TRUTH.**

For a Christian, this is not only a religious duty, it is a logical necessity. We cannot, like some erratic thinkers of mediæval times, admit things as true in Philosophy and false in theology. A genuine belief in revelation excludes whatever is opposed to it, and this it is that constitutes the essence of a Christian philosophy.

Secular Philosophy recognizes no rule, no limit to human thought outside itself. Such was the philosophy of pagan antiquity. It is that of those modern schools which have proclaimed themselves independent of all authority from without or from above. Our encyclical rightly traces back their main source to the Protestant Reformation. "*Adnitentibus novatoribus sæculi XVI, placuit philosophari citra quempiam ad fidem respectum, petita dataque vicissim potestate quælibet pro lubitu ingenioque excogitandi.*"

Christian Philosophy, on the contrary, is that which not only adapts itself to all the requirements of Christian orthodoxy, but finds, in the data of faith, a constant appeal to its highest powers of speculation, and at the same time gives a sense of security and of intellectual strength which contact with divine doctrine can alone impart. As a fact, never has the mind of man shown such a combination of penetration, depth, elevation, and serenity, as in the philosophical handling of the mysterious truths of the Christian faith.

Such a philosophy has always existed in the Church, though in various shapes. Approaching the doctrines of faith, with minds already fashioned by the speculations of the period, the Fathers instinctively sought to harmonize the two different forms of truth, and borrowed freely from each to illustrate and expand the other. Indeed, to the earlier Greek Fathers, Philosophy seemed to have something of a divine character. It was a manner of natural revelation—the special gift of God to the Greeks. Whatever of truth the latter possessed and set forth in their works, they owed (it was held), to the divine Logos. Can we wonder, then, if, in the patristic writings, we so often meet views and expressions visibly inspired by the great masters of ancient thought?

But, although freely borrowed from all, the Philosophy of the Fathers was mainly that of Plato. Between the intuitions of that great thinker and the highest teachings of Christianity, there were points of contact and resemblances strange and striking. His fascinating theory of ideas, immutable, eternal, and dwelling (so the Fathers understood him) in the Divine Intellect itself; his admirable exposition of the existence and attributes of the Divine Being; the poetic and often forcible proofs of the immortality of the soul scattered through his dialogues; his deep sense of the reality and supremacy of the invisible world, it alone being, as it were, solid and substantial, whilst the world of sense was a something shadowy, unreal, oscillating between being and non-being; and last, though not least, the ascetic, elevating character of many of his moral doctrines, — all this invested with the charms of a poetic imagination, and set forth in the most exquisite language, was more than sufficient to captivate the Fathers, many of them men of high philosophic and literary culture. And so Plato became their inspirer and their guide, and Platonism, divested of its errors, the Christian Philosophy of their times.

In a much fuller sense, Aristotle was the intellectual dictator of a later period — not indeed the Aristotle comparatively genuine and complete we now possess, but an Aristotle fragmentary and as much distorted as illustrated by translation and commentary. Yet, even in that imperfect condition, and though devoid of all literary charm, the writings of the great and long-neglected philosopher were destined to exercise on Christian thought a formative influence deeper and more abiding than any other.

The time had come to organize the elements, hitherto disconnected, of Christian belief, to gather up and build into

the regular forms of a science all that human thought under divine guidance had evolved from the first data of Revelation. Only a philosophy, both speculative and practical, spreading out in every direction and touching on truths of all kinds, with methods to analyze, to classify, to build up thought into structural form, only such a philosophy could serve the purpose, and just at the time it came to hand in the principal works of Aristotle. Less Christian than Plato, his theories, nevertheless, lent themselves infinitely better to the development of most of the Christian doctrines. They came nearer to the average intelligence by their constant reference to experience and to the common sense of men. His genius was more practical and better suited to the Western mind, yet his powers of generalization were greater, and as a master of method he stood high above all. A high place was therefore naturally assigned to him in the new science. Scholastic theology was literally built on the Bible, the Sentences, and Aristotle. As it took shape under the great doctors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, while still retaining some of the earlier conceptions, it became in its fundamental theories, in its forms, in its vocabulary, in all its leading aspects, essentially Aristotelian.

One would expect that an alliance so close, and sanctioned by such high authorities, should last forever. But it was not to be. When we come down to the seventeenth century we find Aristotle and the scholastic Philosophy fast losing ground in the public mind, and weakening even in the schools. Yet a while, and the decay will show itself more visible and more rapid still, until, as happened in the first half of the present century, scholasticism has become a thing of the past, and its very language so little in use or even understood, that, in the general directions given in



1832 to the professors of philosophy of the Society of Jesus, we find a recommendation which has all the appearance of a concession, that at least the future students of theology should be taught the meaning of the scholastic terms they were likely to meet.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it cannot be said that during this last period the Church was without a philosophy. Independently of what survived of scholasticism in some of the schools and in some of the religious orders, new thoughts and new theories had come to light, and were welcomed by theologians as well as by the world at large. Associated with the names of Descartes, Malebranche, Leibnitz, Balmès, Rosmini, etc., they became familiar to the new, as pure scholasticism had been to the older generations. It was a sort of eclecticism, not very deep, or systematic, or strong; yet it was truly a Christian Philosophy, loyal to the faith and to the Church; and helped, like the theories it superseded, to light up the obscurities of revealed truth, to defend its doctrines, and to establish peace between reason and faith.

But it would seem as if a permanent basis for such an alliance could never be found. Within our own generation a new current of thought has set in, leading back our schools to the Philosophy of the Middle Ages, and giving once more to the great minds of the past something of the unquestioned and beneficent sway which they held so long, and had lost to the great detriment of religious and philosophical truth.

The preponderant share of Leo XIII. in this movement is sufficiently known. The encyclical "*Æterni Patris*"

<sup>1</sup> *Quamvis ex fugiendæ sint voces quibus, quæ res subjiciuntur, facile intelligi non possint, sermonem tamen scholasticorum eos non ignorare necesse est qui theologiæ deinde vacabunt.*—PACHTLER, *Ratio Studiorum*, Soc. Jes. II. 332.

deals largely with it, and in this connection supplies us with a new and important rule for our guidance.

### III.

The rule is laid down in the shape of a clear and strong recommendation to GO BACK TO THE DOCTRINES OF S. THOMAS, as the most complete and the safest guide in philosophical as well as in theological inquiries. The recommendation is based on reasons which we would gladly recall if space permitted, but which are accessible to all in the text of the encyclical. What we are most concerned in presently is to ascertain its true sense in this particular aspect. For the "teaching" recommended to us as a rule, of one, like S. Thomas, whose voluminous writings touch upon thousands of questions, can hardly be said to extend to all that is stated or countenanced or implied in them; nor can it be applied in the same measure to each one of those doctrines to which S. Thomas unquestionably lends something of the weight of his authority.

The question, as may be seen, is far from being a simple one. If we may venture to suggest a reply, we would distinguish in the Philosophy of S. Thomas the three constitutive elements of all comprehensive philosophical systems — its Methods, its Truths, and its Problems.

By Methods in general we mean the processes by which the mind is led to knowledge; the discipline by which it is trained to discern truth from falsehood, to demonstrate, to discover, to reach, in short, the highest attainable exercise of its powers.

By Truths we understand the ascertained principles of the human intellect. Some are the logical basis of reason

itself; others are the necessary groundwork of moral action or of religious belief; others still, whilst practically less essential, yet add considerably to the range and grasp of the mind, lighting up and ordering in it much that without them would remain hopelessly dark and confused. They all possess two characteristic features. Firstly, they are either intuitively known or susceptible of clear demonstration; secondly, they commend themselves naturally to the sense and judgment of men, and, as a fact, they supply the common stock of abstract truth in current use, the common ground on which men may meet and hold intercourse of thought together. Philosophical systems are valuable in proportion to the number and breadth of the truths thus supplied, and to the firmness of grasp with which they may be held.

By Problems we mean those questions ever coming up from the depths of the soul, or suggested by the contemplation of the visible world or of human life, and which have never been satisfactorily answered. It is one of the noblest purposes of Philosophy, and what makes its chief attractiveness for many, ever to struggle with such questions and strive to dispel the mystery that surrounds them. In each succeeding period they give rise to new conjectures and hypotheses, which in most cases afford no general or permanent satisfaction. Rival theories are imagined, and flourish for a time, and then they are neglected and decay. And so the problems remain with the systems they have given birth to, still dividing the most thoughtful and the most enlightened minds.

As a rule, the truths and problems are closely connected, the truths standing out in the foreground, whilst the problems emerge from behind them. Thus I know for certain that I am free; but whence my liberty proceeds, and how it



can coexist with the other laws of my nature, or with the foreknowledge of God, is a problem. The reality of bodies is a truth; their essence and ultimate elements, a problem. The close connection and correspondence of body and soul cannot be questioned—how they act upon each other can only be conjectured. I carry within me the notions of causality, goodness, duty, etc., but where have they come from? The question has been before the world for ages, and still remains undecided.

Such, then, are the main elements of every system of thought; method, truths, problems, with the theories which they originate, all in combination with numberless notions, remarks, views, illustrations, arguments, which gather round or proceed from the central points of each system. All this, as has been said, we find in S. Thomas, and the question comes back: To what, in these principal features and minor elements, does the papal recommendation extend?

First, there can be no doubt that it applies in full to the method of S. Thomas, unquestionably in this, the highest representative of those scholastic processes, of which Leo recalls the praises written centuries before by another great Pope, Sixtus V.: "*Apta illa et inter se nexa rerum et causarum cohærentia, ille ordo et dispositio tanquam militum in pugnando instructio; illæ dilucidæ definitiones et distinctiones; illa argumentorum firmitas et acutissimæ disputationes, quibus lux a tenebris, verum a falso distinguitur, hæreticorum mendacia multis præstigiis et fallaciis involuta, tanquam veste detracta patefiunt et denudantur.*"

Here we have the characteristic features of the scholastic method, — accuracy, clearness, subtlety of distinction and analysis, logical order, strength of argument, — and at the same time a striking picture of the method of S. Thomas,



as Pope Leo loves to repeat, and as may be seen at a glance by whoever has even a superficial knowledge of the writings of the Angelic Doctor.

In this all are practically at one. Even those who have departed from the more rigid forms of the school acknowledge their indebtedness to them, and are the first to proclaim that the precision and accuracy of thought, so much greater in modern than in ancient times, is principally the work of the mediæval schoolmen.

In the second place, the encyclical refers clearly to the philosophical truths of S. Thomas.

Here, again, we must refer the reader to the pontifical document itself. What strikes the mind of the pontiff is the vast and invaluable body of truths brought together in the writings of the prince of theologians; how the wisdom of the Fathers and of the great thinkers of antiquity seems to have come to him as an ancestral heritage, to which he adds abundant treasures of his own, drawn from the depths of a mind profound, acute, open and active in all directions, and ever guided by an almost unerring judgment. Nobody can read much of S. Thomas without feeling the truth of these remarks. At each page he lights upon ingenious observations, pregnant views, illustrations of the happiest kind, and, above all, great general principles, lighting up almost every region of human knowledge. He feels that the admiration of Leo is more than justified, and that, by calling back our age to such an inexhaustible treasure of truth, with all the authority of the pontiff and the sage, he has done the world at large an invaluable service.

Last of all come the Theories by which S. Thomas and the school have attempted to solve the mysteries of the natural and of the supernatural world. These theories

are borrowed almost entirely from Aristotle; and for this and various other reasons it has been doubted whether they, too, come under the sanction of the encyclical.

To us the affirmative appears certain. Not, indeed, that the questionable can be commended in the same degree as the unquestioned. But it is clear that the pontiff has found the solutions and theories of the school more satisfactory than any others, forming a more complete and more consistent system of thought, and less liable to lead away the mind into unsubstantial and unorthodox doctrines. Consistency and safety are surely strong titles to commendation in any system, and the disorder of thought so lamentably prevalent in the world for the last two centuries is well calculated to make men consider whether finally they had not better go back to the conceptions of the past, which, though falling short of demonstration, had satisfied so many great minds, and given for centuries intellectual peace to the world.

Such seems to be the sense of the encyclical, — a weighty recommendation to give more attention and thought to the writings of S. Thomas and to the whole Philosophy of the schools — too much and too long neglected — with the assurance that such attention and thought would be abundantly repaid. The Pope could not have meant to go farther. Philosophy, as such, that is, outside its connection with revealed truth, does not come any more under his authority than natural science. He deals with it in his directive capacity, not as the infallible teacher of Christians. He knows, besides, that outside the region of religious belief and of evident truth the mind is essentially free, and cannot, even if it would, bind itself to what has failed to satisfy it.

Nor should his recommendation be extended to all the

particulars of the scholastic Philosophy. He himself distinctly disclaims any such purpose. "*Si quid enim est a doctoribus scholasticis vel nimia subtilitate quæsitum, vel pærum considerate traditum; si quid cum exploratis posterioris ævi doctrinis minus cohærens, vel denique quovis modo non probabile, id nullo pacto in animo est ætati nostræ ad imitandum proponi.*"

This applies in an especial manner to the *Physics* of Aristotle, which for ages formed part of the Philosophy of the schools. But by the very general and indefinite terms employed, the Pope leaves each one to judge for himself what other opinions may be implied in the restriction.

Again, he cautions us against unauthorized interpretations of S. Thomas, thereby giving us to understand that the great doctor is by no means responsible for all that is attributed to him. Indeed, almost since his works first came to light, the ablest men have been divided as to the true mind of the great writer in many passages.

Besides, no commendation of the Philosophy of S. Thomas can be interpreted more strictly than that so often bestowed on his theology by the highest authority. Yet we know how broadly and freely such commendation is taken by theologians of the highest note and by religious orders, though pledged by their rules to the doctrines of S. Thomas. Of this we have a notable example in the *Ratio Studiorum*, already referred to, in which the general principle of following the teachings of S. Thomas is accompanied by a long list of exceptions. The same may be said equivalently of various other religious bodies: thus showing in what a liberal sense loyalty to S. Thomas was understood and practiced, even when he was looked up to as a guide. It is a remarkable fact that, at the present day, the same freedom of spirit is to be found even among the sons of

S. Dominic, the natural heirs and traditional guardians of the Thomistic doctrines. With none do we find more readiness to enlarge the ancient boundaries, and to accommodate the traditional teaching to the discoveries and theories of modern science.

Finally, the existence of the Scotist school, side by side with that of S. Thomas through so many ages, with the well-known differences in Philosophy and theology which separate them, would be of itself a conclusive demonstration of what we contend for. S. Bonaventure shares with S. Thomas the admiration of the highest authorities in the past, as well as the praise of Leo XIII. himself; and whatever we may think of the Scotist doctrines in themselves, we cannot look upon the pontifical document as restricting in any measure the liberty enjoyed by their supporters at all times in the Catholic Church.

Thus limited to its true meaning, the encyclical loses that seeming exclusiveness which made it objectionable to many, because they confined their attention to separate passages, and failed to grasp the spirit of the whole.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *THE VICISSITUDES OF SCHOLASTIC PHILOSOPHY.*

Under the title *De Varia Aristotelis Fortuna*, an old Gallican doctor of Sorbonne, Launoy by name, gave, better than two hundred years ago, a history, still read with interest, of the vicissitudes through which the works of Aristotle had passed through the Middle Ages. The scholastic Philosophy, practically identified with them, naturally shared their varying fortunes. In our day we witness its recovery from the almost total neglect in which it had



lain for more than a century. But the length and vigor of its new life must depend in a great measure on the avoidance of what proved almost fatal to it in the past. It will not, therefore, be amiss to consider briefly the outlines of its history.

### I.

We have already explained briefly in what manner the scholastic Philosophy came into existence, how it was gradually built up until it reached its full, majestic height under the master hand of S. Thomas. A structure so complete and so solid, a temple in which the whole Christian world came to worship, might well seem destined to stand forever. But such is not the lot of man's work, whatever shape it may assume. That of the schoolmen soon exhibited signs of decay, and it is its gradual decline from within and from without — in itself and in its hold on the minds of men — that we have presently to follow out and to account for, if only to preserve, so far as may be, its renascent life from what proved fatal to it in the past.

The general fact is unquestionable. Before the close of the thirteenth century the great philosophical and theological movement, begun well nigh two hundred years earlier, had reached its highest level. A few years later, and we look in vain for a continuance of the deep views and bold speculations so common in the foregoing period. No great thinker emerges, no powerful synthetic mind. A dead level prevails, scarce broken by a few who momentarily rise into view and disappear. There is nothing, after all, exceptional in this. It would seem to be almost a law of human development that periods of especial brilliancy in any direction should be followed by a term of powerlessness and sterility. The collective strength of a

nation or of a race is seen, like that of an individual, to exhaust itself in a supreme effort and then to collapse. The generations that follow are content to enjoy the transmitted heritage without hoping or wishing to add to it.

So was it in the schools at the close of the great creative epoch. All the principal questions had been settled — it seemed for good. They had gone through the accustomed phases of obscurity, of discussion, of light. The master minds had passed their verdict on them, and thus stamped, they had passed into the current teaching of the schools. Why open them afresh? Yet speculation lives only on condition of being ever stirred up and compelled to fresh efforts. *Vita in Motu*. Stagnation means decay and ultimately death. But there was little then to keep men's minds astir; no new strong current of thought, not even a deep intellectual heresy, such as awakened and compelled the highest mental efforts of the Fathers. Heresies indeed there were, but the fruit of fanaticism rather than of reflection, and dealt with by the secular arm in preference to theological argument. Neither were there any of those collateral developments which invariably lead to further philosophical speculation. There was no history to speak of, nor could there be in the circumstances. Literature as a distinct pursuit was unknown. Nature indeed was open to observation, but Aristotle was supposed to have seen all there was to be seen in it, and to have accounted for all. Thus confined to the narrow channel of scholasticism itself, that is, of a science almost as definite and settled as mathematics, what remained of mental activity had to spend itself on the little which was still open to it, — a rehearsal of the old theses and the old arguments: questions mostly trivial or unanswerable, yet solved by means of abstract and often arbitrary principles: classifications

of the most artificial and fanciful kind, subtleties, refinements, and distinctions without end. Of all this, indeed, there was more than enough from the very outset, and such was its hold that S. Thomas even did not feel at liberty to entirely do away with it, although one of his objects in writing the *Summa* was, as he tells us himself (*Prolog.*), to remove such obstacles from the path of beginners. “*Consideravimus enim novitios diversis plurimum impediri . . . partim propter multiplicationem inutilium questionum, articulorum et argumentorum.*” Perhaps the fault lay originally with the great master, Aristotle himself, whose keen, methodic mind seems to lead him on to distinguish and divide indefinitely, without any special regard to practical purposes. From whence-ever it came, the evil flourished more and more as time went on, to the detriment both of the dignity and the usefulness of the Philosophy and the theology of the schools.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To give some idea of what the mania for artificial dissection and arrangement of thought had come to, we may quote the following extract of the Commentary by William de Vorillon, a Franciscan of the fifteenth century, on the first words of the *Sentences* of Lombardus. “*Dividitur ista pars in quatuor . . . Primo agitur de beatæ Trinitatis immensa natura . . . secundo de creatæ novitatis ostensa factura . . . tertio de electæ caritatis firma junctura . . . quarto de abjectæ vetustatis ablata fractura. Prima iterum particula in tres partes dividitur. In prima distinctionum præmittitur necessaria notificatio, in secunda earundem concluditur utilis epilogatio. In tertia inseritur Trinitatis miranda explicatio . . . Rursus ista prima pars in tres partes dividitur. In prima quarum ostenditur penes quod versatur doctrinæ speculatio — in secunda distinguitur voluntatis distinctio. In tertia triplex concluditur utilis dubitatio . . . Rursus ista prima pars in tres partes dividitur, in quarum prima rerum et signorum ponitur distinctio, in secunda datur distinctionis declaratio, in tertia concluditur distinctionis applicatio . . . Secunda pars . . . in tres partes dividitur . . . Tertia pars . . . in tres partes dividitur,” and so on for another half-page, with much more of a similar kind almost in every part of the work.*

## II.

Side by side with this evil, another of no less magnitude flourished in the schools from beginning to end — the love of disputation — not as a means to test new views, to clear up obscurities, to refute error, or even to sharpen the mind by dextrous dialectic fencing, but for its own sake, as a display of ready wit, and on all manner of subjects. It was doubtless in some measure a necessity of the times; for, without books, which were rare and accessible only to a few, on what could freshly awakened minds spend their energies, unless in discussing whatever came before them? And then, for the quick-witted who cared not to learn, it became an easy means of asserting their superiority; whilst it kept up for all the pleasant excitement of an incessant contest, such as is found in the public games of our own times, of which the record is so eagerly sought for in our daily papers.

Whatever the cause, the practice of disputations became constant, and gradually spread to all forms of learning. Of this we find evidences at every period from the twelfth to the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Such a condition of things could not but give rise to protest and opposition. The popes, ever alive to the in-

<sup>1</sup> To show what it had come to in the end, we cannot do better than quote the description left us by the Spaniard, Vivès, tutor to Queen Mary of England: "*Nullus est alius studiorum fructus quam præsentis animo non cedere adversario, intrepide eum vel aggredi vel sustinere, et callere quo robore, qua arte, qua supplantatione sit subvertendus. . . . Consultum fuit statim assuefacere puerum et eum perpetuo exercere, ut altercandi recens natis initium, finis nullus nisi cum morte sit. Puer ad scholas deductus primo die jubetur disputare et docetur jam rixari qui fari nondum potest. Idem in Grammatica, in Historicis, in Dialectica, in Rhetorica, in omni prorsus disciplina. Nihil est tam liquidum quod quæstiuncula aliqua velut excitato vento non perturbent.*" — *De Corruptis Artibus Tradendis*, c. i.



terests of the Church, were among the first to raise their voices in warning. Availing himself of his presence in Paris, at that time the most active centre of learning, Alexander III. strictly forbade the thousands of students who, with their teachers, had gathered around him to deal henceforth in theology with figures (allegories doubtless) and inappropriate questions, "*omnino interdixit*," says the contemporary chronicler, "*omnes tropos et indisciplinatas quæstiones in theologia*." So again John XXII., in his directions to the same university, points out for correction the practice of certain theologians, "*qui postpositis vel neglectis necessariis, utilibus et ædificativis doctrinis, curiosis, inutilibus et supervacuis philosophicæ quæstionibus et subtilitatibus se immiscent*."

Another influence helped to counteract the tendency of the schools to dryness and subtlety, and ultimately to weaken their power. Simultaneously with scholasticism a different form of theology had grown up, based, not on argument, but on contemplation and direct intercourse of mind and soul with God. This mystical theology, as it has been called, found its natural home in the religious orders; and through them diffused itself widely, not only among the pious laity, but in the great seats of learning to which they were wont to send their most promising aspirants. Thus, in the very centres of intellectual excitement, as well as in the quiet retirement of the cloister, were heard words of gentle reproof and kindly warning to the too ardent votaries of scholastic science. We catch their echoes all through the *Imitation of Christ*. "*Quid prodest magna cavillatio de occultis et obscuris rebus? . . . Quid curæ nobis de generibus et speciebus? . . . Noli extolli de ulla arte vel scientia, sed potius time de data tibi notitia*." The three first chapters of that wonderful book are espe-

cially striking when read in the light of the mental conditions of the age in which they were originally written.

## III.

A far more active and more destructive influence was brought to bear on scholasticism by the great movement of the Renaissance. To its two principal factors — the dispersion through Europe of Greek literature by the taking of Constantinople, and the invention of printing — was due that wonderful enthusiasm for the ancient classics, and the development of literary taste, which spread with such rapidity all over the Western Church. As an immediate result there grew up, in thousands of the most cultivated minds, a feeling of contempt and aversion for the school — dry, unattractive, and blighting, as it were, the natural beauty of everything it touched. Hence the enmity between the humanists, as they were called, and the schoolmen, so graphically described by Audin in his *Life of Luther*.

In the struggle between new and old which lasted better than a century, two characteristic figures of the distant past stand out in bold relief — Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle, the great and revered teacher, whose word had been law for so many generations — “the master,” as Dante calls him, “of those who know,” — familiar with all subjects, deep and subtle in thought, but in form confessedly uninviting, obscure, and, as Cicero himself remarks, compelling the mind to a constant effort, “*Magna animi contentio adhibenda est in explicando Aristotele.*” Plato, deep, too, and far-reaching, but at the same time accessible to all, smooth and simple in style, bright and playful in his dialogues; vivid, dramatic, overflowing with fancy, an

epitome, in a word, of all that was most refined and fascinating in the Greek genius. Upon a generation awakened to a sense of literary beauty, his power of attraction, as might be expected, was irresistible. To take up his writings after those of Aristotle was like emerging suddenly from the dreary depths of winter into the bloom and fragrance of spring. Plato — the divine — was hailed with enthusiasm, studied, translated, commented. Academies were founded to propagate his doctrines. Many of the most powerful and original minds of the period adopted them; and although the movement died out in little more than a century, it had one great permanent effect: it destroyed the undisputed sway of Aristotle, and taught men to listen to many masters and to think for themselves.

Protestantism, which burst forth in the latter part of this period, naturally helped in the same direction. But it affected scholasticism in a far deeper though less apparent way. It made Catholic theology polemical. In the increasing controversial warfare of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the abstractions and subtleties of the school were gradually dropped, to be replaced by the more effective weapons of biblical and patristic learning. Greek and Hebrew, solid erudition and well authenticated facts, supplied the only argument that told against Protestants; and Catholics themselves, in course of time, rested on them with an assurance which the metaphysical arguments of the past no longer inspired. Positive theology, thus brought back, was cultivated more and more for its own sake. Its sources, historical and biblical, to be properly explored, required a manner of mental tact which metaphysics and dialectics could do very little to develop. The latter ceased, accordingly, to be cultivated with the same general,

genuine conviction; and, though still holding a prominent place in the programme of studies and utilized in public disputations, they were little thought of outside the schools.

This is clearly shown by the small place they occupy in the principal ecclesiastical writings of the seventeenth century. Fleury<sup>1</sup> describes the ponderous tomes of the schoolmen enjoying on the shelves of libraries a dignified repose, which few were tempted to disturb. Mabillon, "the most learned man of a learned age," gives them only a very humble place in his *Treatise on Monastic Studies*; and the greatest educators of the period, Rollin, Nicole, etc., are in agreement as to the worthlessness of the subjects and exercises on which most time was spent by teachers and students.

#### IV.

Whilst the Philosophy of the schools was thus losing much of its importance from within, a new movement came from without which shook it to its very foundations. We refer to the development of the natural sciences, and of the methods by which they came to be cultivated.

Aristotle had supplied the Middle Ages with a science of Nature as well as with a science of thought. But though a close observer himself, and remarkable in his classifications of known facts, as of all else, his speculative mind led him to build theories of the universe devoid of any solid foundation. Yet his authority was such that his cosmology was as much believed in as his metaphysics. Thus all unhesitatingly admitted, because Aristotle had

<sup>1</sup> Ve *Discours sur l'hist. ecclés.*



taught, that the earth was the centre of the universe ; that it was composed of the four elements, distinguished from each other by their relative heaviness or lightness, warmth or coldness, dryness or moisture ; that the celestial sphere and the stars consisted of a fifth essence called ether, the noblest of all, neither heavy nor light, and moving in a circle, the most perfect of all lines because nothing can be added to it. In this manner, on observations of the most ordinary and limited kind, Aristotle and the schoolmen after him had built up a whole theory of the universe, and explained by endless complementary hypotheses whatever facts they were confronted with. But gradually it came to be felt that a knowledge of the world based on *a priori* principles could be worth little and would lead to less ; that only from Nature herself, by direct and untiring observation, could man learn her powers and her laws. To the name of Francis Bacon, more than to any other, history has attached the honor of this new method of study. He certainly taught it more eloquently than any other philosopher, and formulated it more distinctly, as when he writes : “ *Ea est vera philosophia quæ mundi ipsius voces quam fideliter reddit, et veluti dictante mundo conscripta est, nec quidquam de proprio addit, sed tantum iterat et resonat.* ”<sup>1</sup> It met with much opposition, as might be expected, but it ultimately prevailed. This was another fatal blow dealt to the Philosophy of the schools, which were as much committed to the physics of Aristotle as to his metaphysics. The prestige of the latter was dimmed by the failure of the former, and this accounts in some measure for the spirit of skepticism so noticeable at that time. Everything on which men had rested their convictions seemed to fail them. On the one side the traditional re-

<sup>1</sup> *Nov. Organ.*

ligion was questioned, whilst on the other, the venerable philosophy of preceding ages was fast crumbling into dust.<sup>1</sup>

## V.

It was just that condition of mind, in a young man of extraordinary gifts, that led to the greatest philosophical revolution of modern times, and gave the finishing stroke to the supremacy of Aristotle and the schools. Descartes had studied the latter, like those of his time, but they had not satisfied him. He clung to his faith as a Christian, and remained loyal to it through life, but he felt his philosophical convictions to rest on an unstable foundation, and he resolved to take them asunder and build them up on a solid and immovable basis. We know the result, the *Discourses on Method*, which Bossuet called "the greatest book of the age," and which, followed by his *Meditations* and other writings, gave food to the reflections and fresh activity to the minds of men for a whole century.

Space does not permit us to retrace here the growth of Cartesianism in spite of the most powerful and the most violent opposition. It is described summarily in all the manuals of the history of Philosophy, and a detailed and most interesting account of it will be found in the *Histoire du Cartésianisme* by Bouillier, and *Histoire du Cartésian-*

<sup>1</sup> A curious example of the revolt of individual minds against the still respected authority of Aristotle may be found in Caramuel (*Theol. fundamental*, 1652): "Omitto alias nugæ quæ in Aristotele aliisque lectæ hodie assensum extorquent, et hoc tanta tyrannide ut qui oculis credat et Aristoteli decredat audax et indoctus credatur. In magno tametsi olim honore apud Ethnicos, apud Catholicos damnata fuerunt ejus dogmata præscriptaque ab ordinibus religiosorum; et quia omnia humana caduca et inconstantia, iterum et evecta a scholasticis; sed tandem iterum excussimus servile jugum et veritatem unam potius hodie quam totum Peripatetum curamus."

*isme en Belgique* by Abbé Monchamp. Still less can we undertake to examine each one of the theories of Descartes in detail. With a mind prodigiously active and original, he spread his investigations and reflections over the whole field of knowledge, and left permanent traces of his passage in every direction. Of his physical speculations much has disappeared; but certain fundamental conceptions originally due to him remain, and he is the acknowledged founder of one of the most important branches of mathematics — analytical geometry.

In Philosophy he was more radical, ruthlessly putting aside conceptions the most ancient and the most universally accepted, to set up his own in their stead. The minds of men, thus disturbed in their habits, their prejudices, even in their religious beliefs, rightly or wrongly associated with the philosophical theories of the past, naturally resented such boldness, and resorted to every imaginable means to put it down. In France, in the Netherlands, where the new doctrines appeared, they became the object of a concentrated attack. Professors of Philosophy, theologians beyond counting, Catholic faculties, Protestant synods, bishops, papal nuncios, the *Index* itself, and the irresistible power of Louis XIV., all combined to destroy them. The religious orders were unanimous in their opposition. Even the Oratorians, who subsequently became the most ardent supporters of Descartes, laid down the rule in their general assembly of 1671, "that none of the members shall depart, even from the physics of Aristotle, commonly taught in their colleges, or favor the new doctrine of Descartes, which the king, for good reasons, has forbidden to be taught."

But the most active opponents of all were the Jesuits, bound by their constitutions to the doctrines of Aristotle:

"*In Logica et Philosophia naturali et morali et Metaphysica, doctrina Aristotelis sequenda est*,"<sup>1</sup> and making his writings, as was the common custom of the time, the groundwork of the philosophical teaching in all their colleges.

Yet at an early period some of their ablest men yielded to the fascination of the new doctrines. The trials endured by P. André in that connection have been pathetically told by Cousin. P. Buffier is full of the spirit of Descartes. Sympathy for his doctrines grew so rapidly among the members of the Society that the general, Angelo Tamburini, felt compelled, in 1710, to issue directions forbidding a series of doctrines of the new school, this among others: "*Systema Cartesii defendi potest tanquam hypothesis*."

## VI.

Gradually the storm subsided. In a modified form, the theories of Descartes had lost their original opposition, real or imaginary, to orthodoxy. Catholic faith, on the other hand, had been freed in the contest of some of its adventitious accretions. Almost in every religious order we find open defenders of the Cartesian Philosophy. Several are almost entirely won over to it, and we reach the middle of the eighteenth century to find one of the most eloquent panegyrics ever written on Descartes bearing the signature of a Jesuit, P. Guenard.<sup>2</sup>

But long before, the greatest minds had been weaned from the old Philosophy, and become imbued with the new. No reader can take up the works of Bossuet, Fénelon,

<sup>1</sup> Pachtler, *Ratio Studiorum*, ii. 129.

<sup>2</sup> This discourse, which won the academic prize, may be found in Migne's *Démonstr. Evangéliques*, tom. 12.



Arnaud, Thomassin, or, indeed, of any of the great writers of the period, without noticing the change. Outside the religious orders it is almost universal. And whilst the old traditions of the schools are thus broken up and scattered, no single system takes permanent possession of men's minds. Descartes is largely superseded by Locke and Condillac. Leibnitz and Wolf reign over Germany. A sort of general eclecticism pervades even the ecclesiastical colleges and seminaries. The manuals of Toul and Lyons, both mainly Cartesian, are the popular text-books of France during the eighteenth century. The manuals of Belgium are of a similar description. Italy and Spain are more slow to change, but, if we may judge by the works which have come under our notice, they move in the same direction. Balmès is an eclectic, and Ventura, the first in Italy to raise his voice in favor of the old schools, declares in his *De Modo Philosophandi*, published in 1828, that, though educated by men of learning and piety, he had imbibed in his philosophical course most of the false notions of Locke and Condillac.

In short, from the middle of the last to the middle of the present century, Aristotle and the scholastic Philosophy were almost entirely forgotten. Their methods continued to be followed in seminaries; their principal theories were superseded by those of modern times. Outside the Dominican and Franciscan orders, the earlier philosophy was seldom mentioned and still more rarely discussed. In the general direction of studies issued in 1832 for the Society of Jesus, there is no trace of a disposition to go back to the Philosophy of S. Thomas — no special recommendation, in fact, of any school. If we are to judge by the works of the leading professors of the order during the period that followed, such as Dmowski in Rome, Fournier

in France, Rothenflue in Fribourg, Cuevas in Spain, etc., the prevailing tone of their teaching was a free adaptation of Cartesian doctrines and methods, with a tinge of Platonism.

But the second half of the century has witnessed a great change in favor of the Philosophy of the schools. Once more it has been enjoined on the professors of the Society of Jesus, and some of its ablest supporters belong to that learned body. Leo XIII. has given it the authority of his name and the weight of his influence. Under his inspiration Academies of S. Thomas have sprung up in various places, text-books embodying the ancient doctrines have been introduced into all the clerical schools, new editions of the great mediæval thinkers are being published on all sides.

Hitherto the movement seems to be confined almost entirely to the clergy, secular and regular. Occasionally, indeed, we meet among the laity men who show a leaning for some of the theories peculiar to the ancient Philosophy. In connection with Aristotle, the speculations of the great schoolmen have come to be studied with more care, and to occupy in the history of Philosophy a place of which they had been long and unjustly deprived. They are clearly distinguished now from the unworthy accretions which made them, not long ago, a general object of ridicule. Yet nowhere outside the sphere of influence of the clergy can we discover, so far, anything like a collective, healthy movement tending to their adoption as a general system of thought.

But the slowest movements are not the least durable, nor ultimately the least widespread. It took more than a century to ripen and to diffuse the Philosophy of the schools when first it came to light. We must not wonder

if it takes more than a generation to accommodate it to its new environments, and win back something of the universal favor which it formerly enjoyed.

Its success must ultimately depend on two things. First and foremost, on its intrinsic value, positive and relative. Authority may have been necessary to originate the new movement by compelling attention. But philosophy cannot be long sustained on such a basis. Once known, it must rest solely and simply on its own merits. Free discussion and thorough ventilation can alone give it a permanent hold on the minds of men. Secondly, success must depend on the avoidance of the faults which proved so harmful in the past.

How this may be done we shall endeavor to explain in the following Article.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### *HOW PHILOSOPHY SHOULD BE STUDIED AND TAUGHT.*

The practical remarks comprised in the following pages are meant to bear principally on three things:—

The ends to be kept in view;

The practical difficulties to be encountered;

The special requirements of each one of the branches of a philosophical course.

#### I.

Philosophy may be studied for a variety of purposes. All are not equally important, nor can all be fully compassed within the time usually allotted to such studies. It becomes consequently a duty for the teacher to ask himself at the outset, and to keep the question steadily

before him: How can I be most serviceable to those whom it is my duty to teach? What questions, what methods, what mental discipline will best fit them for the work of life as a whole?

1. The first object of a course of Philosophy is *knowledge* — *technical knowledge*. Philosophy, like all other sciences, means a body of notions, facts, problems, theories, doctrines, demonstrations. To become acquainted with at least what is principal in all these; to have realized their true meaning, their mutual connection, their bearing on the most important issues of thought and life, is the direct and immediate object of systematic philosophical studies. Of this knowledge, as the necessary crowning of a liberal education, and as a necessary introduction to the study of Theology, enough has already been said in a previous article.

2. The second object is *mental discipline*. All methodic teaching trains the mind, but such training is one of the main purposes of a course of Philosophy.

The untrained mind is inaccurate; outside the commonest subjects it is easily darkened and confused. It stops at the surface of things; it fails to see into their depths, to catch their connection. It grasps but feebly the higher objects of thought, and is an easy prey to sophism. To correct these deficiencies, nothing can compare with philosophical training, intelligently pursued. Thus by the constant use of rigorous definitions, it compels the mind to distinctness of conception and accuracy of statement; a schooling of the mind begun, it is true, much earlier, since all real knowledge, nay, all use of words, implies something of it. It is, in fact, one of the principal advantages to be found in the translation of ancient languages, a process implying a clear discernment



of the different shades of thought and of the corresponding propriety of words. But such an exercise, however valuable in the hands of an intelligent teacher of Greek or Latin, leads to no scientific distinction, and applies much more to the things of life than to those of abstract thought. Hence the vagueness and confusion so noticeable in the ordinary student who takes up for the first time any philosophical subject.

The same may be said of all the other familiar processes of philosophical studies. To divide and classify properly requires the most close attention and careful analysis. To build up an argument, or even to realize its value, brings into play the faculties of abstraction and comparison. To follow out a series of deductions accustoms the mind to grasp and hold simultaneously many thoughts together. The daily thoughtful handling of books, ancient and modern, educates of itself in that direction. To say nothing of others, Aristotle, the great master of definitions and distinctions, Plato, reflecting in his dialogues the questioning mind of Socrates, and ever striving to get at the meaning of terms, can hardly be touched without imparting something of their nicety and depth of discernment.

3. The third object of philosophical training is the *development of mental power*. Philosophy is meant to broaden the mind, and enable it to take in the manifold aspects of things. It is meant to give depth of thought, to accustom the student to go to the very heart and root of things, to seek for and to find the underlying principle, the ultimate reason beyond which the mind feels neither the need nor the power to go. It is meant more still to impart that rectitude and vigor of judgment by which men test and try whatever comes up before them, weigh the value of each statement, of each proof, verify principles and facts,

admitting, rejecting, or doubting, according to the amount and value of proof supplied. Finally, it goes to form that healthy condition of mind known under the name of strong common sense, — a quickness to distinguish shams from realities, sound from sophistical argument, to take a steady view of things, to get a solid grasp of truth not to be easily shaken by unintellectual influences from within or from without.

Knowledge, — discipline, — power, — such then are the main objects to be kept in view by teachers and students, by the former especially, whose duty it is to determine the methods and exercises by which they may be most effectively attained. The task is no small one; in fact, it is beset with difficulties. The principal of these it may be well to consider here, as on the manner of dealing with them the final result must entirely depend.

## II.

1. The first difficulty the professor of Philosophy has to contend with is the unphilosophical cast of mind of some of his pupils. For, amongst those who may fairly aspire to a professional career, or to the priesthood, it is not at all unusual to find young men entirely unfitted for the ordinary exercises of the scholastic discipline. They are by no means devoid of intelligence; they have derived a fair share of benefit from their previous liberal training; they are sensible, shrewd, — but speculation and formal argument are entirely beyond them. Theirs is a sort of intuitive Philosophy. They see, but they cannot deduct or formulate. They are, and perhaps will always remain, incapable of constructing a syllogism; but they somehow reach the right conclusions as often as others. They cannot tell

you just where the fallacy lies in an unsound argument, but instinctively they feel it is there, and are not deceived by it. Do not expect from them the ordinary definitions and classifications of the human faculties, unless they speak from memory; but their knowledge of character may be equal to the best. Abstract principles seem to be beyond them, yet the correctness with which they judge the things of life would prove that such principles are in some manner present to their minds.

Such as they are, not much philosophical knowledge can be imparted to them. The elementary notions, a statement of the essential doctrines and proofs, is about all they can be expected to understand or to remember. To strive for more in that direction is only a waste of time and labor. But much more may be done to discipline and strengthen such minds, either by eliciting personal effort in what they can compass, or merely by having them watch attentively the training of others, this being about the most improving part of their training.

2. A second difficulty, of the most serious kind and common to all beginners, arises from the utter strangeness of the new field that is opened to their activity. In their previous studies, there was an even, steady advance from what was familiar to what was unknown. Each new form of knowledge began by what was most accessible, and the mind was led on by easy steps to what was most complex and highest, whilst the whole work was done through the medium of the native tongue, and of a vocabulary easily mastered.

But for a beginner in scholastic Philosophy, all these facilities are missing. All is new and difficult — the notions, the terms, the methods, and the language. He is suddenly introduced into a world of abstract ideas hitherto

unknown. And then Latin, as a vehicle of thought, is unfamiliar to him. Even the old, well-known truths assume strange and, to him, unnatural forms, whilst the terminology of the schools is obscure and bewildering. He is soon lost, as in a fog; and if he continues to grope his way through the darkness, it is only because he is encouraged by the voice of his teacher, and occasionally cheered by glimmerings of brightness from beyond, which tell him of the region of light to which he is being led. Some never emerge from the gloom, and even those who do always remember it as the most trying period of their intellectual formation. Too often the teacher, to whom all has become familiar, fails to realize this condition of things, and proceeds serenely on his way, forgetting how hard it is to follow him. Yet his plain duty is to measure accurately each one of those accumulated obstacles, and to do what may be done to remove them.

*First.* As regards the concepts of Philosophy, it is clear that the mind of the student has to be led on, as in mathematics and in every other department of knowledge, from what is simple and accessible to what is farther removed from ordinary conceptions; from the concrete to the abstract, from the familiar facts of psychological experience to the higher laws and principles of thought. In this way he feels from the beginning the solid ground under his feet; he can retrace his steps to the starting-point at any time, and, at every stage of his course, he knows exactly where he stands and whither he moves. For this reason, among others, experimental psychology should come first in philosophical study. It is of easy access, attractive, and it prepares the mind naturally and logically for all that follows.



*Second.* This leads us to another remark relative to the *subtleties and refinements of the schools* on which so much time and intellectual power were frittered away during the Middle Ages. Although the scholastic Philosophy was confessedly encumbered and weakened by them, an attempt is positively made in our day to bring them back again. Ardent inquirers into the older Philosophy, having been led to study them, gradually have come to enjoy them, and now they would persuade the world at large to share the pleasure. That these nice discriminations and dissections of thought are generally groundless or valueless, we would by no means imply; that, in the discussion of many curious and, for the modern mind, worthless questions, a wonderful sagacity and penetration have been exhibited, no reader of the schoolmen will be tempted to question; that even an acquaintance with such subjects is necessary for a thorough knowledge of mediæval Philosophy, we freely admit. But there it should rest. They have little or no business in our text-books. Beginners for whom they are written are too busy; too many objects, solid and important, claim their attention to leave room for so much that was of interest to other ages. The numberless possible forms of the syllogism, the various degrees of the *materia prima*, the entities, entelechies, and quiddities in which our forefathers reveled and lost themselves, may have been very well in their day, but their interest henceforth must remain largely of a purely historical and archæological kind.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered how keenly it was felt, even as early as the sixteenth century, that the subtleties referred to above were a subject of reproach to the schools, and would have to be thrown overboard in order to save the cargo. The following passage from the celebrated work of Melchior Cano (*De Locis Theol.*, Lib. IX. c. 7), though somewhat radical, will

*Third.* The beneficent excision of such excrescences, whilst relieving scholastic Philosophy from a reproach not unmerited in the past, will remedy in some measure the inconvenience arising from the use of the *scholastic vocabulary*; but enough still remains to create a serious difficulty. To understand it, we have only to remember that, among the causes which contributed most to the diffusion of the Cartesian Philosophy, was the fact that its author and followers took up and dealt with the highest questions in the language of every-day life. All technical terms were discarded, so that educated persons could, without any special training, follow the developments and discussions to which the new system gave birth. Since then Philosophy has ceased to be scholastic in the original sense of the word; that is, confined to the schools. In its various shapes it has gone abroad and impressed itself on the literature of the day. It has formed the conceptions and the language of society, and thus already has been taught in some manner to those who have not yet entered on its technical study. Now this study, when pursued on the

prove interesting and probably comforting in its admissions to more than one of our readers: "*Nostri autem Theologi, importunis vel locis, longa de his oratione disserunt quæ nec juvenes portare possunt, nec senes ferre. Quis enim ferre possit disputationes de universalibus, de nominum analogia, de primo cognito, de principio individuationis (sic enim inscribunt), de distinctione quantitatis a re quanta, de maximo et minimo, de intensione et remissione . . . deque aliis hujusmodi sexcentis, quæ ego etiam, cum nec essem ingenio nimis tardo, nec his intelligendis parum temporis et diligentix adhibuissem, animo vel informare non poteram? Puderet me dicere non intelligere, si ipsi intelligerent qui hæc tractarunt. Quid vero illas quæstiones nunc referamus? Num Deus materiam possit facere sine forma, num plures angelos ejusdem speciei condere, num continuum in omnes suas partes dividere, num relationem a subjecto separare, aliasque multo vaniores quas scribere hic nec libet, nec decet, ne qui in hunc forte locum inciderint, ex quorundam ingenio omnes scholæ auctores æstiment.*"

lines of scholasticism, introduces them not only to objects entirely new, but to a new conception of things already familiar. Thus the intellectual processes are differently analyzed and described, the powers of the soul distinguished and classified after a different plan. Again, the old terms of the school, which had fallen into disuse, brought into prominence anew, convey at first no distinct meaning; some of them, expressive of conceptions foreign to the modern mind, have no equivalents in our language, and are spoken of only in their original Latin form. Others, such as *Matter, Form, Cause, Motion, Accident*, etc., are taken in a technical sense more or less at variance with their ordinary meaning. Hence that painful condition of obscurity and confusion so common in beginners, and lasting unhappily in some to the very end. The teacher cannot be too much concerned to dispel it as speedily and as thoroughly as possible. No real work is done as long as it lasts. The student commits to memory and recites, when required, a set form of words, definitions, theses, proofs; he answers objections in the prescribed form, but with only the haziest notion of what it is all about. Ask him to state the same things in other terms, or to put in plain English what he so glibly throws off in Latin, he is powerless to do it. Clearly he knows nothing, and is learning nothing — but words.

*Fourth.* The evil is far from being lessened by the use of *Latin*, as the medium of philosophical instruction. No language, it is true, is better fitted for the expression of any Philosophy than that in which it developed originally and reached its perfection; and if the student's knowledge was to be strictly confined to mediæval Philosophy, and if the Latin tongue was familiar to him, there would be no reason to go outside it. But neither supposition

corresponds to the facts. It is well known that most aspirants to the priesthood in this country enter the Philosophy course with far less knowledge of Latin than is found elsewhere in students similarly situated. And then they come to learn, not only what was thought in past ages, but also what modern investigation has added to the treasure of philosophical knowledge, and even the courses which men's minds have followed when they wandered from the truth,—for how else can they be won back to it?

We may be permitted in this connection to repeat what was written several years ago by Dr. Kavanagh, senator of the Royal Irish University.<sup>1</sup> “Shall Catholic teaching be confined exclusively to scholastic Philosophy in its ancient forms, or shall the professors of Philosophy in Catholic colleges be required to expand and develop the principles of S. Thomas, and apply them to the wants of modern discussion? Shall we ignore the living present, and direct our teaching exclusively to the dead past? Shall we teach our students to refute errors unheard of for centuries, except in scholastic disputations, and to ignore errors which are in active operation around us, and are eating into the very vitals of Christian faith and Christian moral teaching? For the answer to this question, I appeal to S. Thomas himself, ever busy with the errors of his day, and to our Holy Father, Leo XIII. . . . To me it would seem more rational to strike out of the curriculum all the discoveries of science since the days of Descartes, than all the developments of Philosophy since the days of S. Thomas. A Catholic gentleman can get on fairly without a knowledge of higher mathematics, or of the recent advances in physical science; but how can he mix in society without peril to his faith, if he is ignorant of the

<sup>1</sup> *Study of Mental Philosophy.*



facts and views of modern Philosophy which are discussed at every dinner-table? . . . In England, Philosophy is a favorite study with the educated classes, and no one can share in their discussions who is not familiar with its more prominent systems, and has not mastered the questions which divide the various schools. If, then, Philosophy is taught at all, it should not be taught exclusively in a language unintelligible, except to the disciples of a particular school. . . . We must not send the young Catholic into society to do battle for his faith, to unmask error, and to defend truth, using a language which would require an interpreter, and trained only on a system which unfits him to take part in modern intellectual conflicts."

All this is, to say the least, as true of aspirants to the priesthood in this country as of the young Catholic laity of Europe. It entails on the professor of Philosophy an arduous task.

He has, in the first place, to translate for his pupils all that is new or unusual in the conceptions or vocabulary of the schools into the language of ordinary thought. He can be sure to reach the minds of many of them only through the medium of their mother tongue. Text-books, recitations, occasional essays, all in Latin, are a practical necessity in view of the subsequent study of theology, and of the important place which the Latin language occupies in the intellectual and devotional life of a priest. But it has been the experience of the writer for many years that, of those who have been taught Philosophy, and especially scholastic Philosophy, only in Latin, not more than one in half a dozen had brought away with him much more than a set of formulas, with only a very imperfect notion of their meaning, though not unfrequently accompanied by a

strong determination to cling to them all, indiscriminately and at any cost.

Hence, the most experienced professors, while using Latin as the ordinary vehicle of their teaching, do not fail, in their classes or in private conference, to appeal to the vernacular whenever it is necessary to convey the full and true meaning of things to the minds of their hearers. To the student himself, nothing of what he learns is of any value unless he is thus taught to realize it and make it his own. Thus only will it help him to further truth, or will he be able to speak of it in an easy, intelligible manner, and with that completeness and naturalness of conviction with which he speaks of any ordinary matter. Short of this, he will be afraid to wander beyond the limits of the technical phraseology which he has learnt; and a stiff, awkward dogmatism will take the place of a living and communicative conviction.<sup>1</sup>

*Fifth.* But such a discipline, it will be said, bringing home to the mind of the student every notion and every truth, requires more time than is practically available. Why then recommend it?

This brings us to the last, but not the least, of the many difficulties which a professor of Philosophy has to contend with.

The fact upon which it rests is unquestionable. It is with the mind as with the body. Just as some forms of nutriment are promptly absorbed into the system, whilst others are of slow assimilation, so certain forms of knowl-

<sup>1</sup> In this connection, the *Stonyhurst Series: Manuals of Catholic Philosophy*, recently published in English, will be found very serviceable to professors and students. We would also mention an *Elementary Philosophy*, by Mr. James Wilcox, of Philadelphia, which seems to be less known than it deserves.

edge can be acquired continuously and rapidly, while for others more time is essential. Literature, Art, Philosophy, belong to the latter class. They cannot be taught or learned at the same time quickly and effectively. Like the beneficent rain, they need to fall on the mind softly and gently in order to sink into its depths. An able professor can deal with most questions of Philosophy in a single year's course, and his work, if he gives it to the public, will read well. But if you look for it in the minds of his auditors, what remains? Definitions, statements, proofs, committed to memory, and still retained, perhaps; but how little realized? The conscious growth of power, the mental elation, the craving for more, which invariably follow on all genuine increase of knowledge, are painfully absent, except from a few. In other words, a full course of Philosophy, such as it is generally understood, especially when combined with other important matters of study, cannot be given with advantage in a single academic year. Either it has to be limited in matter or extended in time. Even though, by increasing the number of classes, the whole ground may be covered, the other ends above mentioned — discipline and power — are necessarily lost sight of.

And yet they are more essential than mere knowledge, because through them the best sort of knowledge becomes accessible, and, in a measure far beyond, and of a kind far above, what comes by mere teaching. In fact, when the time is so inadequate to all purposes, the best method would, perhaps, be to consider Philosophy principally as a means of mental discipline and mental vigor. In this way the professor would be less concerned to introduce his auditors to a large number of questions, than to fit them to understand and to be interested in all.

That abiding interest in philosophical questions is one of the most valuable results of a judicious training; and it can be secured far better by an occasional momentary lifting of the veil, giving an impression of the vast extent and beauty of what lies beyond, than by rushing right through it all, and reaching the end with a notion that all has been seen. A student, unless devoid of the philosophical faculty, who cares not to go back and look more intently and see more, gives proof that he has seen very little indeed, it may be because little has been rightly shown him.

## III.

The views which we have expressed thus far apply to every part of a philosophical course. Each principal section would require to be considered at length, but here we have room only for a few general observations.

1. *Experimental Psychology*, as already remarked, we consider the best to begin with. As a distinct branch of the science, it has grown rapidly within the last century in interest and popularity. Its most recent developments in connection with physiology have made it one of the most engrossing subjects of the day. Its data, old and new, are the starting-point of some of the gravest problems of mind and life. Yet, strange to say, in most of our scholastic manuals, it obtains only the faintest recognition, appearing, if at all, only for a moment, and in its antiquated form and garb. As a consequence, the student lays them down, having learned nothing new of the human soul, its powers, its laws, its mechanism and working, nothing of the action, normal and abnormal, on it of the nervous system, beyond what any one may know without special study. Surely there is here a considerable lacuna



which demands imperatively to be filled by author or professor.

2. *Logic* comes next. Properly taught, it is a splendid training-school for the mind, and can be made as interesting and enjoyable as it is too often disheartening and dreary. The operations of the mind are, after all, not difficult to understand, and the forms and laws of argument, whilst offering in their endless variety a very healthy exercise for the mind, if time could be spared for them, may be indefinitely shortened and simplified with little positive inconvenience.

The time commonly given them would be better spent on two other exercises. The first is the practice of analysis, by which students might be required to take up a page, carefully selected, and point out the statements and arguments which it contains; the statements to be set forth separately, the arguments reduced to syllogistic form by expressing the implied premises. The second is a critical dissection of some chapter of book or passage of discourse, in which a weak or sophistical line of argument would have to be detected and refuted. The time-honored "Disputations" should not be put aside; but they require a judicious guidance, much drilling, and are really accessible only to a chosen few.

All these exercises accustom the mind to close attention, to reflection, to accurate thought. They give a growing sense of power which leads on of itself to greater efforts.

3. A new branch of study, often connected with logic in the early part of the century, deals with the groundwork and laws of *Human Certitude*. In the general healthy condition of mind during the Middle Ages, it was little needed; but its importance in a period, such as the

present, of widespread skepticism, can scarcely be exaggerated. On all sides we meet men highly gifted, yet unsettled in almost all their convictions, "knowing everything," as has been said of them, "and believing nothing." It is part of the sacerdotal calling to bring them back to natural as well as to supernatural belief. But the disease is hard to cure, and it is contagious. The matter consequently requires to be handled with great caution and tact. We must confine ourselves here to observe briefly.

*First.* That far from allowing the basis of certitude to be narrowed, as was done by Descartes, Kant, and so many others, it should be maintained, in conformity with the wisest schools of Philosophy ancient and modern, on the broad foundation on which Nature herself has placed it.

*Second.* This is the only service that Philosophy can render in such matters, for neither the system of Aristotle nor any other can add to the natural, primitive, indestructible fact of human trust in the human faculties.

*Third.* Certitude is strengthened in all, but especially in young men, by habitual contact with those whose minds dwell in the regions of serene conviction. S. Thomas is admirable in this regard. He works his way through the most intricate questions with the same security as a mathematician works out a problem. One feels that he walks in the light.<sup>1</sup>

*d.* To be too trustful is as perilous to certitude as to be

<sup>1</sup> A homage of a more general kind to the Angelic Doctor from the pen of a Protestant bishop will be welcome to our readers. "If penetration of thought, comprehension of views, exactness the most minute, an ardor of inquiry the most keen, a patience of pursuit the most unwearied, are among the merits of the philosopher, then may Aquinas dispute the first place among the candidates for the supremacy in speculative science." — DR. HAMPDEN, Bishop of Hereford, England, article "Thomas Aquinas," in the Metropolitan Cyclopædia.

skeptical. To find weakness where none was originally suspected produces a reaction leading to the opposite extreme. The mind is best balanced when it recognizes the true value of the grounds upon which theories and systems are built.

4. Of *Metaphysics*, still more than of the other branches, there is so much to say that a whole chapter would scarcely suffice to convey it. We must confine ourselves here to respectfully recommend,

*First.* That the section of Ontology, or *General Metaphysics*, should not be made unnecessarily obscure or dry. It need not be either. At the same time it is not desirable that everything should be made easy, or dropped where it becomes difficult. The forces of the mind, like those of the body, are developed by effort; and the difficulties themselves become positively attractive and exciting when the mind is properly led up to them.

*Second.* That in view of the intellectual conditions most common in our day, the section of natural Theology, especially the proofs of the existence of God, should be developed as fully as possible.

*Third.* That in consideration of the universal prevalence of the inductive methods, they should be freely employed by the professor to establish the necessary principles of demonstration when not self-evident.<sup>1</sup>

5. The course of *Ethics* has to be drawn out for clerical students with a constant reference to their subsequent studies of Moral Theology. There are several fundamental questions, purely philosophical, which have assumed such importance in our day and in this country, that

<sup>1</sup> A happy illustration of this will be found in an article of Rev. J. Vaughan, on the Existence of God, in the *Dublin Review*, of January, 1892.

they have to be dealt with thoroughly at some time or another.

6. As far as time permits, the theories, systems, and truths taught should be exhibited to students, not in abstract isolation, but as they emerged from the minds of men, and developed and spread in the course of ages. Almost as far back as we can look into the past, we find man struggling with the darkness which envelops him on all sides, and guessing at the hidden causes and connections of things. The record of human thought thus striving to solve the fundamental problems of mind is what constitutes chiefly the *History of Philosophy*.

A thorough knowledge of it is most useful to the professor. He should be familiar with the great originators of thought, Plato, Aristotle, S. Augustine, S. Thomas, Bacon, Descartes, etc., as well as with the vicissitudes of their systems. In possession of this knowledge, he will find it both easy and helpful to introduce it into his teaching, and still more to show his hearers the bearing of ancient abstract speculations on the living issues of the day. It would be desirable, and we believe possible, that students themselves should go back occasionally to the sources. One of Aristotle's shorter treatises, a few dialogues of Plato, something of the mediæval, modern, and contemporary writers, would give them a more vivid sense than aught else of the true meaning and spirit of philosophical systems, and be a powerful inducement to pursue, in after-life, studies thus made attractive from the beginning, and sure to prove elevating and strengthening to the end.

We will conclude by observing that, our age being both literary and historical, the philosophical training of our clerical youth, to be practical and effective, should



share in that twofold character. They should be taught not only to think, but to give a free, forcible, and happy expression to their thoughts. The success of Platonism, Cartesianism, Malebranchism, in the past, of all forms of agnosticism in the present, has been and is largely due to the literary ability of their supporters.

## CHAPTER III.

*APOLOGETICS.*

WE have now reached, in the course of our remarks on Clerical Studies, the stage at which they lose their general character, and become special or technical.

By his previous literary and scientific training, and more still by the study of philosophy, the aspirant to the priesthood has been fitted for entering on the subjects which properly belong to his sacred calling. It is through these that we have now to follow him during the period of his initiation, and in the ensuing years in which the daily experiences of missionary work so happily combine with a continuation of his previous studies, to the unquestionable benefit of both.

These studies have for their object a distinct group of sciences, in close contact, it is true, with various departments of secular knowledge, yet separated from all by their religious character. Hence the name of Sacred Sciences which they commonly bear. They may be all considered in some sense as different departments or dependencies of the one great science of Theology. But custom has given to that name in modern times a more limited sense, as applying only to divinely revealed truth scientifically stated and developed. It is in this restricted sense that we propose to deal with it presently. Later on we shall be led to consider the other forms of sacred knowledge which branch out from it in various direc-

tions, expanding indefinitely the field of ecclesiastical studies.

That theology, whether taken in its narrower or in its broader sense, should be the object of the unceasing mental activity of priest and cleric, is a truth so often repeated and so obvious, that we need not stop to dwell upon it here. All feel that sacred science is as much and as naturally expected in a priest as a knowledge of the law in a lawyer, or of medicine in a physician. And, just as the latter are commonly supposed to be familiar with all that concerns their respective professions, so a priest is credited with knowing everything connected with religion; for is it not written that "the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth"? In other words, the things of religion, in all their shapes, are his specialty, the staple food of his mind, the habitual dwelling-place of his thoughts, to which they instinctively return, as to their natural centre, from whatever other objects may have temporarily distracted them.

Among the things belonging to or connected with theology, there are few to which the mind of a thoughtful priest is more frequently and more forcibly recalled among us at the present day, than to its very foundation, that is, to the proofs and to the defense of the Christian faith. This constitutes the object of Apologetics to which we have first to direct our attention.

## ARTICLE I.

### *PROOFS OF CHRISTIANITY.*

#### I.

All Christian theology rests on the fact of God having manifested Himself to mankind, not only through the

spectacle of nature and the voice of conscience, but by a direct supernatural revelation of His mind and will. If He had chosen, he might have manifested supernatural as He manifests natural truth to each individual soul; or He might have awakened in man an unhesitating response to revelation when presented from without; or He might have surrounded it with signs of its divine origin so manifest as to preclude all hesitation and dispense with all research. But such has not been the divine economy at any time. From the very beginning heavenly truth was manifested to our first parents only in forms which might be questioned and disregarded; and ever since, whilst near enough to man to make it accessible, it has been at all times far enough removed to allow him, if he chose, to lose sight of its existence. Even Christianity, notwithstanding the supernatural brightness with which God has surrounded it, remains to the present day for mankind at large a question freely debated, and ultimately settled for each one by his own judgment.

For this reason the necessity has been felt at all times of supplying to the honest seeker after divine truth, to the believer who dwells in it, to the armed champion who undertakes its defense, unquestionable proofs on which its claims may be rested, — “of making them ready to satisfy everyone that asked them a reason of the hope that is in them.”<sup>1</sup>

Such reasons were a primary necessity when Christianity was first preached to mankind. Only on the strength of them could men be induced to submit to all that was implied in the adoption of the new faith. Later on, when the civilized world had been won to it, and during the whole period of its undisputed sway, the need was little

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 15.



felt, the universal acceptance of Christianity being rightly considered as the most conclusive of all proofs in its favor. But when its divine truth came to be questioned afresh and openly assailed, as it has been for the last two centuries, the necessity was once more felt to collect and to set forth the proofs, old and new, on the strength of which the Christian religion lays claim to the faith and obedience of all men.

How needful such a demonstration is at the present day, no priest need be told. For in his daily experience he cannot fail to notice that, while the great majority of our Catholics retain undisturbed their ancestral faith, and see distinctly, or feel deeply, the indefeasible claims it has on their loyalty; still there are not a few whose religious condition shows manifest signs of weakness, whilst all distinct doctrinal belief is fast fading out of the other religious denominations. And yet, among the latter, how many who feel with deep apprehension the darkness that is gradually gathering around them, and silently envy the serene assurance of their Catholic friends and the strength they gather from the teachings of their priests! How many others who have become entire strangers to all belief, yet crave in secret for the light they have lost, and, like the blind man of the Gospel, stretch out to grasp some helpful hand, if perchance there be any that will lead them back to it! We may add that to none are they more ready to listen than to the Catholic priest, and thus even for their sakes, — for he is a debtor to all, — as well as with a view to strengthen, to foster, and to protect the faith of those of God's children who are committed to his special care, the Catholic priest is under a strict obligation of making himself familiar with the best and most effective methods of accomplishing that blessed work.

## II.

The first thing to be done in this view is to acquire a knowledge, at the same time scientific and familiar, of what is called "The Evidences," or proofs of the Christian faith. The student of Catholic theology has not to go far in search of them. In all the text-books he finds them set forth methodically, and in substance as they have been for the last century. Originally formulated against the Deists, and built on their admission of the great natural and moral truths, these arguments have little varied in their general outlines. The mind of the inquirer is led on step by step from a belief in God to the possibility, the necessity, and the reality of a divine revelation.

This last fundamental and all important fact is established by a series of proofs drawn from the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, the miracles of Christ and the Apostles, the character of Christ himself, and the sublimity of the Gospel, the rapidity with which it won acceptance, the testimony and superhuman courage of its martyrs, the manifold benefits it has conferred on mankind.

These are what may be called the classical proofs of Christianity. But they are not the only ones. God has never ceased from the beginning to reveal to mankind his presence and His fatherly love. His action is felt all through the history of the chosen people, and more still in the history of the Catholic Church, through every phase of her existence. True, it is not equally visible everywhere and to all. But just as the practiced eye of the expert or artist, in the careful examination of some great picture, detects the hand of a well-known master, not only in its main features, but in numberless minor yet characteristic touches which to the untrained remain unnoticed ;

so the thoughtful observer of Christianity discovers the impress of the divine hand, not only in the miracles of the Gospel, and those no less great nor less unquestionable of Church history, but in countless other facts and aspects of that same Church, — in so many battles fought and won against such fearful odds, in the lives of so many of her children, in the power and holiness which flow, as it were, visibly from her sacraments, etc.

Such proofs are less the object of formal study than of the observations and reflections of a lifetime. They grow with the mind that remains open to them ; but even when they reach their full growth, they cannot be imparted in their fullness to others. Only those who are gifted with a similar insight can realize and enjoy them. Hence the Christian advocate is mainly concerned with proofs more susceptible of being clearly formulated, and he studies them, not only with a view to ascertain their full power, but also to accommodate them to the requirements of those to whom he expects to be helpful.

### III.

This is his second duty, and in view of it he has, before aught else, to form as adequate a conception as possible of the mental condition of those to whom he appeals.

There is a wide difference in this regard between the condition of the apologist and that of the theologian. The latter is not concerned with the thoughts of those around him. He lives in the past. He grasps the forms of divine truth as they come forth under the action of philosophical principles, or show themselves through the medium of history or of Biblical exegesis, or are heard through the voice of the Church. The apologist, on the contrary, while no

stranger to the past, is principally concerned with the present, catching as they come to light the thoughts of the period, realizing the feelings, the needs, the aspirations of his contemporaries, the hidden springs of action and belief, which, consciously or unconsciously, impel them. He has to be familiar with their habits of mind and their logical methods, to follow the currents of thought which prevail in each class of society he is expected to influence. He has to learn to go down into the depths of individual souls, and discover, amid much that is wasted and decayed, what live parts still remain on which divine truth may be engrafted.

Nor must this study be confined to the time of his preparation or early ministry. For men's minds are ever moving, and it is simply wonderful what little hold certain arguments have on one generation which to the preceding generation seemed unanswerable. New facts of history, new discoveries of science, come to light, and alter the view of things. Statements and principles universally accepted in the past gradually make room for others, and so a new presentation of the credentials of Christianity becomes a practical necessity for each succeeding generation.

#### IV.

Once in possession of the data of the Christian evidences and of the mental and moral conditions to which they have to be accommodated, it only remains for the apologist to pursue in detail the work of adaptation; that is, to single out for each individual, or for each class, the proofs best suited to their needs, and to present them in the way most likely to form or to strengthen their convictions. A few remarks on each in this connection may not be amiss here.



1. To Pascal,<sup>1</sup> the proof drawn from the Messianic prophecies seemed the most striking of all. Cardinal Newman<sup>2</sup> betrays a similar feeling by the prominent position which he assigns to prophecy in his outline of the proofs of Christianity, and more still by the remarkable power with which he sets forth its testimony. Quite recently, another earnest defender of the Christian faith, the Duke of Argyle,<sup>3</sup> expresses himself somewhat to the same effect.

"I may be permitted here," he says, "to express a very strong opinion, that in recent years Christian writers have been far too shy and timid in defending one of the oldest and strongest outworks of Christian theology, I mean the element of true prediction in Hebrew prophecy. It may be true that, in a former generation, too exclusive attention had been paid, and too much stress had been laid on details. . . . But the reaction has been excessive and irrational."

We cannot say it has been so among Catholics; yet it must be acknowledged that the Hebrew prophecies are little thought of to-day, even with us, as a practical means of confounding unbelievers or of winning them to the faith. They require too much previous culture to be appreciated by any but a few. And then they are too open to discussions and difficulties of detail, too much out of harmony with the modern trend of thought to be of much avail. But they serve to strengthen the faith of the believer, and to reveal to him, in the most beautiful light, the providential action of God in the preparation of man's redemption.

<sup>1</sup> *Pensées*, Art. xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Grammar of Assent — Revealed Religion*.

<sup>3</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, 1891.

2. The miracles of the Gospel constitute what we might call the staple proof of Christianity. By their indestructible historical value and by their manifestly divine character, they undoubtedly form an inexpugnable fortress in which the believer may always take refuge and dwell in security. Yet they were less appealed to in the early Christian ages, because the common belief in magic and oracles lessened their demonstrative power; and even to-day they offer less help than might be expected to the inquirer and to the unbeliever. They are so far removed from the present that their very remoteness envelops them, to the superficial observer, in a haze of uncertainty; while they depend for their evidence on so many particulars that the unwilling mind can easily place itself beyond the reach of their demonstrative power. Besides, the scientific and critical spirit of the day, of which we shall speak later on, has strongly turned the modern mind against all facts which imply any interference with the laws of nature; in fact, to most of those who have ever been or who have become strangers to the faith, all miracles, even those of the Gospel, are more a hindrance than a help to belief.

3. Hence a greater readiness, in those especially whose training and mental habits are of the modern type, to listen to proofs of the moral kind. The most striking among them is found in the person and character of Christ Himself, so utterly unlike that of His contemporaries, Jew, Greek, or Roman, — so unlike anything in history before He came, or since He came, unless reverently copied from Him. There is something peculiarly attractive in it for the noble-minded and the pure, and it is silently winning souls to the faith day after day. It is a remarkable fact that no writer has felt more deeply or expressed more hap-

pily the transcendent human beauty of our Lord than the great Unitarian, Dr. Channing.<sup>1</sup>

4. A similar and, for some, no less effective charm is to be found in the Gospel itself, — in the simplicity, purity, sublimity, and practical wisdom of its teachings. The Gospel is confessedly unlike any other book; nothing approaches it in all human thought, except what is borrowed from it. No wonder that, appealing, as it does, to what is noblest and worthiest in man, and revealing to him that other and higher self which each one bears within him, it should have become also, to deep and thoughtful souls, a manifest and unmistakable revelation of God.

5. The same may be said of the benefits bestowed on mankind by the Christian faith. At all times and in numberless ways, they have led men to belief. In our day, when so many consider doctrines less in the light of their speculative truth than in that of their power to promote human progress and human happiness, their efficacy as a proof is especially great. To the moralist, to the historian, to the student of social science, it is becoming every day more manifest that what is best in the human race since Christ came is directly traceable to His influence, and that He is, morally and socially, no less than spiritually, the Saviour of the world. This is what wins and binds many to Christianity at the present day, whilst the very thought of what the world would come to if it were to disappear from it, causes others to cling more steadfastly to the Christian faith as the only hope of the human race, and to thrust aside the difficulties which obscure its divine radiance.

It will be noticed that all these arguments rest on facts — historical, psychological, moral — which only cultured

<sup>1</sup> "Character of Christ" and following discourses.

minds can verify for themselves. Yet the truth of these facts may be sufficiently ascertained without personal investigation in so far as they are formally admitted or not questioned by opponents. We may point out in particular three great facts which unbelievers can neither deny nor evade, and which they have never been able satisfactorily to account for. They are the Jewish religion, the Christ of history, and the Gospel. Nobody has ever been able to explain, short of a visible, permanent action of Providence, how the Jewish people succeeded in possessing, during so many centuries, the only rational religion known in all antiquity. Nobody could ever account on natural grounds for the apparition of such a person as Christ, even irrespective of His miracles. Nobody could ever show where such a thing as the Gospel came from, unless from God. Every attempt to do it has led only to signal failure.

The advantage of building on these facts is that they are entirely independent of the critical difficulties raised in connection with the Old and New Testament. Whatever opinion may be formed about the origin and character of either, the contrast of the Jewish religion with all other religions, of the Gospel with all other doctrines, of Christ with all other men, remains substantially the same, and equally impossible to account for.

V.

The proofs referred to thus far are purely objective, though by no means independent of the personal dispositions of those to whom they appeal. But there are others of a subjective kind, which appeal directly to the needs and anticipations of the soul, in preference to the facts of



the outside world ; and it must be acknowledged that such arguments have more to do with conversions to the faith in our day than almost any others. They are based on the more deeply felt wants of human nature, on an ever present and keen longing of the soul for guidance, or for strength, or for purity and forgiveness — sometimes on a craving for direct intercourse with God or for comfort in affliction and trial.

Now only a positive, revealed religion can answer such demands ; and the Christian faith, especially as it is found in the Catholic Church, meets them admirably. They see and feel this, and no more is needed to make them believers. Especially between the Gospel and God's little ones — the poor, the suffering, the oppressed, the sorrowful — there exists a divinely pre-established harmony, which makes them take to it at once and without effort. The unlearned, too, — that is, the majority, — whose very lack of culture unfits them for any personal investigation or independent judgment on the value of the ordinary proofs ; who have, in fact, to take the proofs themselves on trust, as well as the doctrines, find in the very sense of their inability a decisive reason to accept the message as it comes to them, recommended, not only by authority, but by the very distinctness and fullness with which it answers all their need or reasonably wish to know.

But it should never be forgotten that, in the matter of religious faith, as in all practical convictions, something more than mere argument is required ; fair-mindedness — a sincere wish to know the truth, and a consequent readiness to turn the eyes in the direction from which the light comes. The proofs of religion, as has been already observed, are not of a kind to compel belief. They are not, they cannot be, mathematical, or physical ; they are what

is called moral, that is, they imply an appreciation of testimony and of the bearing of facts, which it must rest with each one ultimately to make for himself. In that wonderful book, the *Grammar of Assent*, Cardinal Newman has shown how intricate such appreciations are, and how dependent are proofs in all concrete matter on an endless number of premises and assumptions, acting, as a rule, unconsciously, and leading on the mind to its conclusions. The whole chapter *On Inference* has a direct bearing on the present question.

In one of his earlier writings,<sup>1</sup> he had already remarked that to believe in the Gospel implies a certain condition of mind, a moral temper fitting the soul to receive, to welcome, and to retain it. "The mind that believes is acted upon by its own hopes, fears, and existing opinions. This is the case with all faith, and not merely religious. It is almost a proverb that persons believe what they wish to be true."

"Such," he observes on a later occasion,<sup>2</sup> "seems to be the state of the case when we consider it. Faith is an exercise of presumptive reasoning, or of reason proceeding on antecedent grounds; such seems the fact whatever comes of it. Let us take things as we find them; let us not attempt to distort them into what they are not. . . . If children, if the poor, if the busy, can have true faith, yet cannot weigh evidence, evidence is not the sole foundation on which faith is built. If the great bulk of serious men believe, not because they have examined evidence, but because they are disposed in a certain way — because they are ordained to eternal life, this must be God's order of things. . . . Yet it does not follow that the evidence may not be of great service to persons in a certain frame

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on "Reason and Faith."

<sup>2</sup> Sermon xii.

of mind. Careless persons may be startled by them as they might be startled by a miracle. . . . Again religious persons sometimes get perplexed and lose their way ; they are harassed by objections ; see difficulties which they cannot surmount ; are a prey to subtlety of mind or over-anxiety. Under these circumstances the varied proofs of Christianity will be a stay, a refuge, an encouragement, a rallying point for faith, a gracious economy ; and even in the case of the most established Christian, they are a source of gratitude and reverent admiration, and a means of confirming faith and hope."

What adds to the intricacy of the mental process in the present matter is the great number of facts it includes. Some of them, it is true, are strong enough to bear the whole weight of the demonstration, such as the Resurrection of our Lord, or the Conversion of S. Paul ; yet their power is largely dependent on their number. It is not any single Messianic prophecy, or any solitary miracle of our Lord, or any separate feature of His divine character, or any special trait or special benefit of His teaching that fully reveals the divine ; it is the whole. And as each aspect draws its full persuasive power from the whole facts, so each fact gathers energy from its various circumstances. Details are everything in such demonstrations. Abstract proofs can be conveyed in comparatively few words. Historical or moral proofs are essentially dependent on particulars ; without them they are no proofs at all, but only a statement of proofs which might be given.

Lastly, it will be well to remember that, although most of the arguments in support of the Christian faith are logically conclusive independently of each other, yet, as a fact, it is only in their combination that they give entire repose

to the mind. If Christianity, for instance, were not a living thing amongst us, with a great history going back through centuries, the demonstration borrowed from the Gospel, whilst remaining unanswerable, would perplex more than it would convince. In the same way the past of Christianity, however wonderful, we would hardly hold with assurance as revealing the action of God, if at the very origin we did not find such a thing as Christ and the Gospel. Thus again, before we make up our minds that the latter are, one and the other, divine, we want to know what has come of them. In the same way we fully accept miracles in support of a doctrine only when we have made sure that the doctrine is worthy of such support; and the doctrine in turn, however transcendently beautiful, we do not finally accept as coming from God, until some sign from without has given us the assurance that we may safely do so.

It is in this way that proofs, which in themselves may not seem conclusive, add, nevertheless, considerably to the strength of the whole argument. Thus, for instance, the harmony of the Gospel with the anticipations of the human soul already referred to, though not in itself a demonstration, opens the mind and makes it welcome the direct proof. There are many in our time who seem to need no other. Some are satisfied with less still. A distinct, earnest statement of Christian truth recommends it so strongly to their minds that they straightway accept it. Indeed, if we follow the preaching of the Gospel from the beginning to the present day, we shall find that clear statement and unhesitating affirmation, supported by the life of the preacher, have done more to implant and spread the faith all over the world than all the arguments and all the miracles which have been put forth in support of it.



## VI.

It remains for us to mention the principal sources to which the advocate of Christian belief may turn for help in his work, or to which he may direct the inquirer, the weak, or the tempted.

The literature of the Evidences is extremely abundant and ever growing. Much of the earlier part of it has been brought together in the nineteen quarto volumes of Migne's *Démonstrations Évangéliques*. The more modern contributions are to be found by the score on the shelves of clerical libraries and in the religious and secular periodicals of the day. Each country and each form of Christian belief has supplied arms and combatants to the common cause; Catholic France, in the *Conférences* of Frayssinous, Lacordaire, Monsabré, Frémont, in the works of Aug. Nicolas, Bougaud, and scores of others. Catholic Germany is justly proud of such apologists as Guthberlet, Weiss, O.P., Hettinger, now at last accessible in English, and Schanz, the recent translation of whose work is doubtless known to many of our readers, and well deserves to be in the hands of all.

England has done her share nobly in this regard. To say nothing of the other great apologists of the last century, Butler's *Analogy* and the *Evidences* of Paley remain classical down to the present day, and are read with profit by thousands; whilst the Bampton, Boyle, and other lectures supply, year after year, new discussions and proofs, many of which are destined to occupy a permanent place in the Christian Evidences. Each of the three English cardinals of the century has contributed to the work,—Wiseman in his *Relations between Science and Revealed Religion*, still interesting and valuable, though written

more than fifty years ago; Manning in his admirable little book, *Religio Viatoris*, leading on the inquirer, step by step, to a belief in God, in Christ, in the Catholic Church; Newman in many of his writings, but nowhere so completely and forcibly as in his chapter on "Revealed Religion," in the *Grammar of Assent*. Nor has our American cardinal been wanting to the cause. *Our Christian Heritage* meets the requirements of a vast number of honest seekers after Christian truth, and adds every day to the abundant fruits of *The Faith of Our Fathers*. Brownson, Hecker, Hewit, are names familiar to our readers.

Finally, among the best exponents of the grounds of Christian faith among our Protestant contemporaries we may mention Professor Fisher of Yale,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mead,<sup>2</sup> Canon Row,<sup>3</sup> *Aids to Faith*, etc. But whilst the young theological student will find in these and so many others extremely valuable suggestions and helps, still nowhere can he meet the whole question taken up more thoroughly and satisfactorily in brief space than in most of the modern text-books of Catholic theology.

## ARTICLE II.

### "DEFENSIO FIDEI."

A study of the grounds of Christian belief is the natural introduction to a course of theology. It is a special need of our times, and so generally felt that the *Demonstratio Christiana* has come to be one of the most important treatises of our text-books. It is also one of the most enjoyable to the youthful theologian, on account of its

<sup>1</sup> Various works, summarized in *Manual of Christian Evidences*.

<sup>2</sup> *Supernatural Revelation*.

<sup>3</sup> *Christian Evidences*.

strong logical texture and conclusive proofs, and, as a consequence, of the full security with which it allows him to raise on its broad basis the structure of Catholic theology.

But this preliminary work would be insufficient if revealed truth, whilst thus solidly established, was not at the same time made safe against the attacks to which it is exposed on all sides. A defense of Christian belief is as necessary as its demonstration, for the reasons to believe can be fully effective only when the principal obstacles have been set aside; whereas, these once disposed of, the truth of Christianity can easily be made evident to the fair-minded inquirer. To remove such obstacles is the work of the apologist, extending over the whole field of Christian doctrine, but principally gathered round the central fact of revelation.

## I.

To defend divine truth has been a necessity from the beginning. Of Christ Himself it was foretold that He would be "a sign that shall be contradicted," and the whole Gospel narrative shows us how "His light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." Nor was it to be otherwise with His disciples. He warned them of it beforehand, and the early history of the Church tells how His prediction was verified. For nearly three hundred years Christianity was at the bar on its trial. Every human interest and human passion was aroused against it. Jews and Gentiles combined, not only to persecute, but to discredit it. Political power and social prestige, prejudice and calumny, philosophy and fashion, were by turns set in motion with a view to close men's minds against it.

But defenders were never wanting. S. Peter and S. John open the list of apologists in their defense of the new doctrine before the Sanhedrim; soon after, S. Stephen; then S. Paul, in Jerusalem, in Athens, in Rome, in every part of the world to which he conveyed the divine truth. So was it with the other apostles, with whoever preached the Gospel, with whoever ostensibly adopted its teachings; for all had to meet the objections without number which were awakened in men's minds by the strange and often unwelcome truths suddenly manifested to them. The answer, it is true, was generally given in the noble life or the glorious death of the believers; not unfrequently it found utterance in the replies of the martyrs to prefect or proconsul; but its most lasting and, to us, most valuable expression is embodied in the apologetic writings which form so important a part of early Christian literature.

In the ages that followed, such a defense became practically needless. The triumph of Christianity was the refutation as well as the defeat of her enemies. And then, close on the conversion of the nations to the faith, there came a period of almost unbounded reverence and trust toward religious authority. Unquestioning belief reigned supreme; and whatever difficulties might arise in individual minds were awed into silence by the very sacredness of the subject, and by the universal feeling of religious submission which pervaded the Christian world.

But to the ages of faith succeeded a period of mental disturbance and doubt. Begun with the Renaissance, developed by the Protestant Reformation, religious skepticism raised its head boldly in the Deism of the eighteenth century, and to-day it triumphs with the rationalists, the positivists, and the agnostics of every denomination. This it



is that has led to the steady development of Christian apologetics in modern theology ; and if we would see how necessary it has become, we have only to consider for a moment the condition which society has reached in these the last years of the nineteenth century.

## II.

There is no denying it, we have entered a period of exceptionally deep and widespread unbelief. Christianity has ceased, in a great measure, to be the acknowledged basis of society and the common bond of civilized nations. Outside the Catholic Church, it is fast losing its hold on individual minds. The seeds of doubt sown by the Reformation, and long stayed in their development by various causes, have at length come up and well-nigh covered the whole surface of Protestant countries, stifling everywhere the divine germs of revealed truth. Confusion of thought, hesitation, and perplexity are universal. The most vital teachings of the Gospel are held by the great number, even of professing Christians, as mere opinions about which nothing certain can be known. Year after year the most prominent Protestant writers have less to say on positive Christian doctrines ; they clearly aim at committing themselves to as little as possible ; in fact, the decided tendency of the hour is to make religion independent of all definite beliefs.

We speak of those who still claim to be Christians. But how many who, though conforming in some measure to the religious habits of their surroundings as a matter of social propriety, or as the expression of what remains of religiousness in them, yet acknowledge, when questioned, that all real faith has departed from them ! The number of such

men — and women — in this and in most Protestant countries, is simply incredible, and only those who have taken pains to inquire, or who have observed on a large scale, can form any conception of it.

Yet the downward course of the age does not end there. A still more radical skepticism has taken hold of a considerable number of our contemporaries. All around us we witness the upheaval of what had been long and rightly looked upon as the groundwork of all moral conviction and conduct. Vital questions regarding God, the soul, human liberty and human responsibility, duty, immortality, and the like, which were commonly considered, thirty or forty years ago, as fully elucidated and finally settled, are reopened and discussed anew, not as a mere scholastic exercise, but as problems still dubious, and never probably to get a final answer. The philosophy of the day is full of such discussions; but its chief delight is to trace the phases through which each question has successively passed, as if nothing could be known of truth beyond the history of man's efforts to attain to it. This, in fact, is the very ground of the modern positive theories, so widespread among scientists and so freely adopted by those who claim to be our intellectual guides, their fundamental position being that, outside the world of sense and experience, nothing can be known with certitude, and that all philosophy can only be a systematic arrangement of facts. Such speculations happily can affect only in a slight degree the common sense of the great number; yet they help to entertain that general distrust of the unseen which is at the root of the religious skepticism referred to above, and which is so prevalent a characteristic of the Protestantism of to-day.

But can Catholics, outsiders will ask, escape influences at the same time so widespread and so detrimental to

Christian belief? In a great measure they can, and they do. To confine ourselves to this country, we may safely say that the great majority of them live and die in the undisturbed and undoubting possession of their Christian heritage. After the grace of God and the invaluable helps to be found in the Catholic Church, many of them owe this tranquillity of their faith to the invigorating religious atmosphere which they habitually breathe, and to other safeguards by which Providence has surrounded them. With some, the religious convictions imbibed from the cradle have so grown into the very substance of their minds that they are proof against any amount of exposure to hostile influences. In not a few there is something still more like a heavenly gift. In the heart of modern skepticism and worldliness, as long ago in the midst of pagan corruption, there are souls with whom to believe unhesitatingly and to act simply on their beliefs seems the most natural thing in the world. Their minds are somehow so open to the truths of faith, their hearts so admirably attuned to its spirit, that they accept what comes to them from above and live by it, without any seeming effort. "Children of the day — children of light," S. Paul would call them; the shadow of doubt never darkens their horizon, or, if any there be, it is only as those bright clouds which float across the summer sky only to enhance its purity and beauty. Difficulties never trouble them. The heavenly side of things is so clear that their darker aspects are lost in it. What sorely perplexes others is to them either unintelligible or unimportant; or, if a difficulty at any time touches their minds, it is only for a moment. It falls off of itself, and cannot fasten.

Still it is difficult for the great number even of Catholics to escape entirely the pernicious influences of an age so

saturated with unbelief. The modern channels of thought are all infected with it, and carry the infection almost everywhere. Text-books of science, manuals of history, the monthly reviews and the daily newspapers come to us too often bearing the seeds of doubt hidden amidst the interesting and valuable facts and truths they convey to us. How can the pure gold of faith not be tarnished by the contact? Is there not a visible weakening of belief in too many already? and, whilst the bulk of our Catholic population remain trustful and true, may we not notice, especially in the younger generation and among the more cultivated and the more thoughtful, a growing sense of the obscurities and difficulties of their faith? Are not many, though still loyal to it, nevertheless concerned, perplexed, eager to question when they dare? Are not some deeply disturbed and shaken; some, alas! caught up by the rising waters of unbelief, and drifting into infidelity? With us the evil is only at its beginning; it is just the time to apply the remedy.

*Principiis obsta, sero medicina paratur.*

### III.

What the remedy should be must depend principally on the nature and origin of the disease. Whoever therefore has received the mission of rescuing or preserving God's children from unbelief must first of all ascertain, as fully and as accurately as may be, the causes which lead to that unhappy condition. On the present occasion we can refer to them only in a general way; we have to confine ourselves besides to the intellectual difficulties which tend to weaken and destroy the faith.



Of these difficulties, some arise from the very nature of the divine economy, natural and supernatural, and have at all times exercised the minds of men. The Fathers of the Church and her great theologians have felt bound to consider them, with the result in many cases, notwithstanding centuries of labor, of neither entirely satisfying their readers nor themselves. The providential action of God, for example, as seen in nature or in history, or as revealed in the Gospel, is shrouded in mystery which human thought is powerless to dispel. After all that has been written on it, the existence of evil still weighs heavily on some of the greatest intellects. The doctrines of the Incarnation, of the Redemption, of the Resurrection of the body, of the Eucharist, of eternal Reprobation, etc., when closely and critically examined, suggest numberless difficulties. In a word, all that shocked the religious sense of the Jews and the common sense of the Gentiles in the days of S. Paul, "*Judæis scandalum, Gentibus stultitiam*," remains still a trial — a terrible trial often — to those especially who reflect deeply on them for the first time, or come upon them from without, or come back to them after long neglect, with questioning minds sharpened by the methods and discipline of other sciences.

But the difficulties of faith are far from being confined to its mysterious doctrines. The Christian religion is committed besides in various degrees to numberless facts, extending over many ages ; indeed, it may be said over all times, for its history goes back to the cradle of the human race, and its promises have to be verified to the end of the world. Branching out in every direction, it touches at various points on the natural sciences, on metaphysical principles, on moral theories, on some of the most important departments of history ; and all along this inordinately

extended line of defense, it is open to attack at any time, with the additional disadvantage that, however ill protected some of its positions may seem to be, yet, inasmuch as each commands the others, not one of them can be abandoned. The loss of that one would be fatal to the whole. Let a single statement — fact or principle — to which revelation is committed, be once disproved, all the rest become unreliable.

This apparent weakness is not of a nature to disturb the thoughtful believer. First of all, there is nothing new in it. Christianity has been exposed to the hostilities, covert or open, of some of the keenest and most cultivated minds for more than eighteen hundred years, and is none the worse for it. Like the human organism, so delicate in structure that almost anything would seem sufficient to disturb its intricate functions, yet on it goes, through years and years of unceasing action, bidding defiance to the destructive agencies which surround it; so Christianity lives on through centuries, holding steadily, at least in the Catholic Church, to all her original beliefs and defined doctrines, without ever feeling compelled to abandon a single one of them.

But this triumphant attitude, it is claimed, can be no longer maintained. Up to a comparatively recent date, too little indeed was known to permit an independent critical investigation of the facts and teachings of Christianity; but now it is no longer so. Within the last hundred years a wonderful change has come over the intellectual condition of man. The human mind has "gone forth conquering, to conquer." In almost every direction it has achieved victories which in past ages had not even been dreamt of. The earth has been explored to its extremities and to its depths, and made to relate the history of its

origin and vicissitudes. The telescope of the astronomer has swept the boundless expanse of firmament, and gathered from the stars the secret of their formation and of their primordial elements. History, with her helpmates, has reconstructed and given back to mankind the lost annals of its earliest ages. The laws of what was strangest in nature and in man have been brought to light and made familiar to all; psychology has looked into the hidden depths of the soul, and metaphysics serenely contemplated the mysterious heights of the divinity. In a word, modern research has extended itself to the whole field covered by religion and by the Bible, so that there is scarce a statement of importance in either which may not now be tested directly or indirectly by some one form or other of modern science.

Now, the process of verification, undertaken from the very beginning of the new development, is still actively pursued. But what is it leading to? The Christian apologist claims indeed that no contradiction has ever yet been found between true science and true faith; yet modern investigation has undoubtedly led to a weakening of Christian belief in men's minds. It is a sad but unquestionable fact that most of the leaders in the various branches of human knowledge are at the present day strangers to the Christian faith. Later on we shall have to consider more closely the bearing of this fact on the certainty of religious truth. But from now we may explain how it comes to be.

All supernatural religion includes miracles as objects of faith, and is itself based on miracles. Now the natural tendency of modern knowledge is to weaken belief in the miraculous, and it cannot be denied that such belief has in certain ways steadily declined. In past ages generations of men, imaginative and credulous, had peopled the world

with miracles. Whatever happened outside their ordinary experiences was at once assigned to some supernatural agency, and the most intelligent readily acquiesced in the belief. But this was entirely insufficient to satisfy the popular craving for the marvelous. Narratives without number came forth relating extraordinary happenings, special providences, visions of angels and of evil spirits, etc., which were eagerly listened to by all. People lived, in fact, in a world of wonders.

The modern mind is just the opposite of all this. It has been trained to consider nature as subject to constant, universal laws, scarce ever, if at all, interfered with. Much of what was looked upon as supernatural in past times has now come to be accounted for by natural causes, and much more is universally discredited. Historical criticism, even in the hands of Catholic investigators, has entirely demolished, or reduced to the proportions of ordinary history, numerous marvelous narratives upon which the imagination and the piety of the faithful had fed for ages. No wonder if the process, unceasingly applied and made familiar to all, begets a widespread disposition to explain everything, in the present and in the past, by natural agencies, known or unknown, to distrust whatever claims to be outside or beyond them, and to suspect that, as modern science has thus far set aside so much of the supernatural, further progress will ultimately dispose of what still remains of it. Such a disposition, fully developed, would be fatal to all religious belief. It has led already to the rationalism of our day, the fundamental doctrine of which is, that the real is always natural, and that the supernatural is always unreal. How destructively in particular this principle has worked in its application to the Bible our readers scarce need be reminded. Under its action all



trace of the divine has disappeared from the Old and New Testament. Christianity itself is looked upon as only one of the many phases of religious thought, all equally evolved out of the natural impulses of the human soul, — good, perhaps, and useful in its day, but now grown obsolete, or to be retained only in its ideal conception and in its moral teachings, henceforth dissociated from the historic and dogmatic basis on which they had originally stood.

## IV.

Such is, in brief, the condition of mind with which the Catholic apologist has to deal; such is the fatal tendency which he has to counteract if he would preserve in its purity and integrity the faith of God's children, and hold out a helping hand to the thousands outside the fold who are carried away by the tide of infidelity. How he may best accomplish the task we shall state later on. For the present we will confine ourselves to a few remarks of a more general kind. Underlying all modern unbelief there is, of course, the perpetual struggle of the human spirit to free itself from all authority, and the undying opposition of the human will to the yoke of Christian law. But in our day there is more than that. If we go to the root of contemporary infidelity, we shall find that in almost all cases it goes far deeper than an objection to mysteries or to miracles; that, consciously or unconsciously, our unbelievers have ceased to admit a First Personal Cause of all that exists. German pantheists and materialists, French determinists, English positivists and agnostics, meet here; and close behind them come in the representatives of the natural sciences and of the destructive criticism of the Bible. We shall find, furthermore, that this is only a special and

more accentuated form of a far wider spirit of skepticism, extending to almost all purely metaphysical truths.

It follows that, besides the special measures of intellectual, moral, and spiritual discipline which his experience and zeal may suggest, in dealing with individual souls, to the defender of the Christian faith, he has to make sure that in each case he is building on a solid foundation; that the mind which he would lead to, or strengthen in, religious belief is already in undisturbed possession of natural truth; that it is provided in particular with a real sense of God, such as reason and faith unite in revealing Him, ever present and all sustaining, loving, just, Lord of creation and Father of all men. Outside such a conception, familiar to Christians, there can be practically no question of demonstration or defense; whereas, under its action, when present, and the consequent belief in a guiding Providence, the other truths of reason, if momentarily lost, will come back, as to their natural home, and faith will take fresh root and fasten in the soul.

The apologist is thus led back to the philosophical studies with which we have already been concerned. It may be safely said that never in the present connection has their importance been greater. In the ardent struggle between faith and unbelief the scene of action has often shifted from one region to another. Nowhere is the contest keener at the present time, and the issues more decisive, than in the field of philosophical truth. In no sphere of knowledge, consequently, does the apologist need to be more completely at home. His reading must be largely — yet with due caution — amid the metaphysical and moral speculations of his contemporaries. He must know the works that have caused so many to turn away from the light of reason no less than from that of faith; still

more must he be familiar with those which have been most effective in preserving men's minds from doubt, and imparting the power to hold on firmly to ascertained truth.

Our readers doubtless know many such works; yet we may be permitted in conclusion to mention specially those of Balmès, the various philosophical writings of St. George Mivart, particularly his book on *Truth*, which contains what is best in all the others, and lastly the volume of Dr. McCosh on *The Intuitions of the Mind*.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *THE FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS OF THE DEFENSE.*

An important task lies to-day before every official representative of the Christian faith,—the task of vindicating its absolute truth, of dispelling the clouds which are ever gathering around it, of strengthening the convictions of those who believe, and of giving rest to the minds of the unsettled and perplexed.

The duty, it is true, is very unequally divided; but we can hardly imagine any position in which a priest is entirely exempt from it; and the ability to perform it may be looked upon, in most cases, as a fair standard, for each one, of his own usefulness. This, indeed, is so generally felt in recent years that it has led to giving a large and ever-increasing share to the study of Apologetics in all the programmes of clerical studies. No priest now goes forth to the work of the ministry without having made himself acquainted with the principal objections directed against Christianity at large and against its essential doctrines.

But this is only a beginning. For many of the difficulties expounded in the class-room are only imperfectly real-

ized by the young student. It is later on that they will assume their full force, when a deeper view of things, or a closer contact with perplexed minds, will compel him to look more deliberately into them, and deal with them more thoroughly than he could have done whilst still himself a stranger to hesitation or misgiving.

Besides, as has been already remarked, the lines of attack and defense are constantly changing. Objections much spoken of in the last century, or even in the last generation, are now almost forgotten, whilst others have come up and taken possession of men's minds. To see this for himself, the reader has only to open any of the apologetic works written thirty or forty years ago. Side by side with many things of permanent value, as true and as useful now as when written, how much will he find unsatisfactory, how much missing of what would be needed to meet the difficulties of the day! Even our text-books, though occasionally revised, are seldom quite up to date; so that it only remains for the defender of the faith, if he would be truly helpful to his fellow-men, to labor unceasingly for himself, and to keep pace with the onward course of contemporary thought in its bearing on the truth of religion.

This, of course, has to be done in a manner and a measure in keeping with the requirements, the surroundings, and the facilities of each individual priest. But we may be permitted here to state the general lines on which all should proceed, and the higher principles which they should steadily keep in view.

The objections or difficulties with which the apologist is concerned arise, and can arise only, from the opposition existing, or supposed to exist, between revealed religion on the one side, and human knowledge on the other.



Three things therefore have, in each case, to be considered: (*a*) the statements of science or human knowledge; (*b*) the teachings of the Christian faith; (*c*) the true nature of their relations, that is, how far they agree or disagree. It is only when these three things are ascertained that the difficulty can be properly dealt with, and each one of them suggests important remarks.

### I.

First of all, then, the apologist has to consider the facts and principles, philosophical, historical, scientific, etc., which give rise to the difficulty under consideration, and ascertain their true value; that is, how far what is objected belongs to demonstrated truth, or is only a plausible induction, an ingenious theory, or a mere conjecture.

For it may be any one of these, though ushered in under the magic name of science. Only the most ignorant believe that whatever is styled scientific is unquestionably true. As a fact, in every science, mathematics excepted, in conjunction with ascertained truths, we find an indefinite number of positions, statements, deductions, etc., which are anything but certain. Philosophy, for instance, is a science; but who thinks of considering everything in philosophy as beyond doubt? History is a science; yet how little comparatively we are absolutely sure of in history! Political economy is a science; still the ablest men are divided on some of its fundamental problems. Medicine is a science, or rather a group of sciences; yet how much in it remains conjectural! Even in the field of physical science, where endless observations and experiments have given to a certain number of facts and laws an authority never again to be questioned, how many others

await a more thorough verification, whilst high above them all, the general theories which so powerfully captivate the popular mind, are only plausible guesses. We talk flip-pantly of ether, electricity, forces, physical and chemical, attraction, gravitation, molecules, and atoms, as if we had them all spread out before our eyes; yet what are they all but theories, — likely enough because they account for the facts, but liable to disappear any day in presence of some broader synthesis, or simpler explanation, or of new facts which they are insufficient to account for?

Such, then, is human knowledge in all its departments, and at each one of its successive stages: a collection, in varying proportions, of certainties, probabilities, conjectures, and hypotheses.

To which of these categories do the statements made into objections belong? This is the first question which the apologist has to investigate. He may be competent to do so of himself, by virtue of a previous special training, or because the case is of that kind which requires only ordinary care and common sense. For it would be a mistake to imagine that the man of average understanding and culture is not just as capable of observing certain facts as a specialist, or of drawing his conclusions from them, if properly ascertained. Indeed, as a rule, there is no necessity for a personal independent judgment, the point in question having been ordinarily tested already by men of undoubted competence. When they are all agreed, the uninitiated may safely accept their award; in fact, it would be presumptuous to depart from it. Thus, in history, in philosophy, in the various sciences, there are conclusions bearing directly or indirectly on religion, so commonly received on all sides that a defender of the faith would only injure himself and his cause by opposing them.

But if the representatives of the science to which the question belongs are divided among themselves, if great names and great schools are found on opposite sides, surely the apologist has a right to consider that question as unsettled, and to deal with it accordingly.

Such is the case at the present day with the famous theories of Transformism and Evolution. The principal facts upon which they rest are not questioned, and the theories themselves have gradually won the favor of the most distinguished men of science. But then they have met with opposition at the hands of others, nor do their most fervent votaries claim to have demonstrated them. As a consequence, to the uninitiated, that is to the immense majority even of cultivated men, they can appeal only as a plausible yet still questionable hypothesis.

The same remark applies to the conclusions which have been proposed in connection with Biblical subjects. Only a few have won universal acquiescence. The others remain a subject of lively discussion between those whose special knowledge entitles them to an independent judgment. The apologist, in his professional capacity, is equally free to discuss or to dismiss them. If he sees his way to prove the weakness of what is objected, he may do so; if not, he can wait until the specialists have settled their differences.

## II.

What has been said of secular, holds good also of religious knowledge. As it is found in books and in the minds of most believers, it is a compound, not only of defined dogmas and of commonly accepted doctrines, but also of probable deductions, of opinions and conjectures, which each one is free to adopt or to dismiss as his judg-

ment may dictate. Children generally look upon all that has been told them in their religious instruction as part of the Christian doctrine. They grow up in that belief; and thousands live and die holding on to religious notions which rest on the slenderest foundations, simply because these notions had originally come to them from the same source as the rest, and had been delivered to them as an explanation or a development of some essential doctrine.

Of course the more enlightened know that there is a difference between doctrines strictly enjoined and mere opinions. They know that in the course of ages there has gathered round the solid centre of divine truth a series of speculations, interpretations, conclusions, of very unequal value; but they cannot go far in the application of the principle. Even theologians often disagree in such matters, some holding doctrines as obligatory which others consider as matters of opinion. Their agreement itself does not always suffice to settle questions, for they may concur in probabilities as well as in certainties.

To give a few examples. How much, for instance, we hear and read of the angels and of the evil spirits, and yet of how little of what regards them are we absolutely sure! Again, theologians and mystical writers give us long chapters on the state of innocence in which man was originally established; but a little attention will suffice to show that most of what is said on the subject is only probable or merely conjectural. And so it is with many other familiar tenets, such as those commonly connected with the dogmas of purgatory, indulgences, heaven, hell, and the like. All through we find the same disproportion between what is commonly said and what is positively certain.

But nowhere is it more striking than in the notions



which for centuries were gathered from the Bible. For, whilst admitting readily that many expressions in the sacred writings should not be taken literally, yet instinctive reverence for the Word of God led Christian minds to accept in their obvious sense all the statements they found in it, so long as they had no positive, cogent reason to depart from such an interpretation. In this way, for example, they were led to believe that the whole visible world was created in the space of six ordinary days, about six thousand years ago; that the earth was the principal part of the divine work, and that the sun, moon, and stars were created in view of it; that Noah inclosed in the ark specimens of all living creatures incapable of sustaining life in the waters of the Deluge; that the Deluge itself extended over the whole surface of the earth; that the various tongues spoken since the flood were all miraculously originated at the Tower of Babel, etc.

If we take up any of the older exponents of the Bible, or of theology, Catholic and Protestant, this is what we find unhesitatingly stated in them, not indeed as part of the Catholic faith, but as the obvious meaning of the sacred narrative, from which they did not feel at liberty to depart because they saw no sufficient reason to do so. But the reasons came. Modern science proved the old positions to be untenable; and gradually the Catholic mind withdrew from them, or continued to state them only in a loose and hesitating way.

Nor should we look upon this evolution of Christian doctrine, even in the Catholic Church, as having reached its term. Outside the region of dogma, many facts and views commonly admitted at the present day may have to be given up at some later period, whilst others freely debated in our time may, centuries hence, assume the sub-

stantial form of ascertained and unquestioned Christian doctrines.

Meanwhile the apologist has to determine to the best of his power, and with all the helps at his command, what is final in Christian belief and what approximates to it; what is sufficiently proven to be a practical, though not an infallible, rule of thought; what may be freely held or rejected; what can no longer be reasonably sustained. Much of this work of doctrinal classification he will find already done. But it never is ended. Especially in a period of transition like ours, new views come up every day, and have to be tested. What seemed to be finally settled has often to be considered afresh, and the whole situation to be occasionally reviewed with care.

### III.

The respective positions of religious and secular knowledge once thoroughly ascertained, either in general or in any given case, it only remains to place them in presence of each other, and compare their respective statements.

Now, the Vatican Council tells us that between the certainties of faith and those of reason, that is, of human knowledge, there can be no real contradiction. Therefore, whatever opposition there may seem to be, either is only apparent or, if real, it occurs in the outer region which does not belong to true science or to true faith.

As a fact, the principal objections of unbelievers are based on misapprehension. They are directed against a distorted view of Christian doctrines, or against opinions which form no essential part of them. Of this we have a striking instance in the old-fashioned and shallow, yet ever effective attacks of Mr. Ingersoll, who almost invariably

assails, not so much the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, as the human conceptions of them which are often much more open to attack. Indeed misrepresentation and calumny, conscious or unconscious, have been at all times the favorite weapons of infidels. To repel them, only one thing is needed : a plain statement of the truth, such, for instance, as Archbishop Ryan's remarkable lecture, "What Catholics do not believe." The truth once known, the objection is meaningless, and falls to the ground.

But if the opposition be real, as may happen ; when the statements put forth in the name of science, or religion, or of both, have no claim to certainty, even in the eyes of their most accredited representatives, — how is it to be dealt with ?

In the same way as in any other subject. The stronger side should prevail ; and if neither side can claim the victory, the question at issue should remain open and undecided.

As we have just suggested, three cases are conceivable : scientific certainties in opposition with theological opinions ; ascertained religious doctrines in opposition with scientific speculations ; conflicting conclusions and views of religion and science, none of which can claim to be demonstrably certain.

Now, first of all, as often as the progress of human knowledge, be it history, Biblical criticism, or natural science, leads, by sudden discoveries or by a slow, steady accumulation of facts or inductions, to conclusions morally, if not absolutely, certain, it becomes the duty of the defender of the opposite positions held under the name of religion gracefully to yield. The cause of religion can gain nothing, and is sure to lose much, by an obstinate defense of what has become untenable. It is not, nor has it ever

been, the policy of the Catholic Church to close her eyes to evidence, and cling indiscriminately to all that is old. How many long accredited notions have not her exponents given up within the present century, in Church history, for instance, and in Biblical exegesis! How much of what the Fathers and ancient commentators had gathered round the first chapters of Genesis has slowly given way under the ever-increasing pressure of modern discovery! Individuals may have suffered in the process, but religion, far from losing, has emerged from it more youthful and more free.

But when certainty is on the other side, when the statement put forth in the name of religion is an indubitable element of the Christian faith, it becomes the duty of the apologist to insist that the opposite views and speculations of human knowledge, however plausible, shall give way. Thus, for instance, the unity of the human species, now commonly admitted as part of the general theory of evolution, was much questioned forty years ago by scientists, because, in the hypothesis of a common origin, they were unable to account for the difference of race found among the inhabitants of the globe. If no other but human knowledge could be appealed to, they might have maintained, as some still do, that distinct races of men must have been created from the beginning. But the opposite is not only a natural, but a religious fact, clearly implied in the sacred narrative. It is at the very root of the whole Christian economy of the Fall and of the Redemption; and so it only remains for the apologist to maintain it unhesitatingly, and for the scientists to whom we refer, if they be Christians, to relinquish their speculations, and add one more to the many facts of Nature they are unable to account for.



Finally, there are cases of conflict in which no certainties are found on either side ; no doctrines to which religion is definitely committed, no scientific theory, no historical fact which can be looked upon as proven — current opinions, beliefs, probabilities, on both sides. As might be expected, the choice will be guided for each one by his predominant mental habits and tendencies. The scientist, the critic, the scholar, will be naturally disposed to make light of the religious opinions which interfere with their favorite views. The theologian, on the contrary, instinctively conservative, will find it much easier to thrust aside a scientific theory, though attractive and plausible, than to part with views which he had never thought of but with reverence, and which are often inseparably bound up with the earliest and holiest impressions of his life.

But justice and expediency equally forbid the apologist to follow uniformly one or the other course. *Ex hypothesi*, the truth may be at either side ; he has therefore to lean in each case to where it is most likely to be found. The conservative disposition of theologians is undoubtedly praiseworthy ; but to be guided by it, regardless of all besides, would be far more injurious than serviceable to the cause of religion.

1. First of all, it would justify in some measure the reproach so often addressed to its followers, of clinging blindly to the past in all things, and of discountenancing and impeding all progress capable of disturbing their quietude.

2. Next, it would inevitably lead to humiliation. For, although many seeming advances of human knowledge ultimately come to nothing, there are many others which, from weak beginnings, advance steadily, and ultimately

win universal favor. To oppose these persistently in the name of religion is simply to commit ourselves to a losing battle, and expose us to be driven back from one position to another, and finally be compelled to surrender at discretion, simply because we have undertaken to defend our religion with weak weapons.

In the last century any questioning of the literal sense of the first chapter of Genesis was resented as irreligious. Dom Calmet refers indignantly to those who were disposed to admit more than an interval of twenty-four hours between the great creative act and the production of light. But afterwards, in presence of the conclusions of geology, commentators were only too happy to allow countless ages for the first and for each of the following days of creation. Even thus widened indefinitely, the sacred narrative still accommodates itself imperfectly to ascertained facts; and some of the ablest defenders of revelation in our time are led to see in it allegory, poetry, liturgy, — anything but a historical narrative of facts.

In the same way a time was when the chronology of the Vulgate, based on the Hebrew text, reigned supreme. But its narrower limits proving insufficient to accommodate all the facts newly discovered, interpreters fell back on the broader lines of the Septuagint. These have in turn proved unequal to the requirements of the case, and so our apologists are driven to maintain that there is no such thing at all as a consecutive chronology in the Bible. Besides the humiliation of thus ever yielding, there is in it something especially dangerous for the faith of the observant and thoughtful. For, as they watch the retreating movements and the narrowing lines of those who have assumed to explain and defend the Christian religion, a fear naturally arises in their minds that, one after the

other, all the positions held by believers may be ultimately captured by the advancing armies of scientific infidelity. It is, in fact, what they actually see in every one of the sects outside the Catholic Church — doctrines and facts of paramount importance, if historical Christianity is to remain, feebly defended, or entirely surrendered to save what is considered more vital still. Whence a spectacle so disheartening even within the lines of Catholic orthodoxy? Simply because these lines have been unduly extended, and mere human conceptions unwisely sustained in the name of the Christian faith.

3. Finally, Catholic scientists may fairly claim, on their side, that if a suspicion of unsoundness in the faith is kept constantly hovering over such of their views as seem to run counter to commonly received theological opinions, their Christian conscience is unjustly alarmed and saddened, whilst their liberty of research and speculation is unduly limited. It will not suffice to say, "Prove your case, and you will no longer be interfered with." It was exactly what Bellarmine said to Galileo. But just then Galileo could not supply demonstrative proof. It often takes generations to demonstrate what the genius of one man has intuitively divined. The theories which, in the course of time, have won universal assent, began by being humble hypotheses which could only claim to be admitted on trial, until the facts, patiently observed, would reveal their real value.

#### IV.

These reflections might seem to suggest an entirely opposite course, namely, that of narrowing at once the line of defense by giving up all the disputed points which form no part of the faith, and concentrating the available

forces on what belongs essentially to the Christian revelation.

But such a method cannot stand the test of a close examination.

First of all, it would require a previous agreement as to what doctrines are essential to make up the complete body of revelation; and such an agreement, as all theologians know, is simply impossible. Even if the line were to be drawn sharply at what is *de fide Catholica*, it would give rise to endless discussions.<sup>1</sup>

But it could not be drawn so close, for all theologians agree that, outside what has been formally defined, there is a large number of doctrinal statements which a Catholic is not free to deny without laying himself open to the imputation of heterodoxy.

Next, even among those religious beliefs which, in our present condition of knowledge, cannot be looked upon as certain, there are many which recommend themselves in various ways to the reverence of the enlightened Christian, which he will instinctively retain as long as he can do so reasonably and consistently, and relinquish with reluctance if ever the force of argument compels him to do so. Meanwhile it may, and often will, be found that the traditional position was stronger than had been imagined, that the point in question was more closely bound up than was thought in the body of the faith, and that by a timely resistance one more element of divine truth had been rescued from desecration, and fully brought to light in the Church of God.

We are thus led back to our original position, that of recommending to the apologist equal justice toward all that comes up before him, whether it proceed from a reli-

<sup>1</sup> Note the recent controversies on inspiration, evolution, etc.



gious or a secular source. In the region of opinion mistakes are always possible, and it is the duty of the apologist to detect, not to defend them. He is the armed champion, not of old traditions, nor of new theories, but of ascertained religious truth. It is none of his business, as an apologist, to take sides in questions freely debated. To the Catholic Church alone it belongs to put an end to all controversies in which religion has a share, and she is remarkably slow to do so. Patient and serene in the midst of excitement and clamor, she quietly bides her time; and when she does interfere, it is much oftener in a disciplinary and directive, than in a doctrinal way.

The apologist can do no better than imitate her. Ever strenuous in the defense of necessary truth, he should learn, in what is still undecided, to stand back, and watch, and wait. He is not the only defender of the Christian faith. Inside and outside the Church it reckons other earnest and devoted supporters. Their action will serve to guide his efforts, whilst the vicissitudes of the contest will show him better than aught else what may be sustained, what should be abandoned, what needs further elucidation before anything definite can be reached. In this way his powers will be devoted only to the maintenance of divine truth, and religion will be committed to nothing beyond itself.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### *THE METHODS AND RULES OF THE DEFENSE.*

In the above remarks on the mission and work of the Christian apologist, several suggestions thrown out incidentally seem to require a statement more distinct and

more complete. They refer principally to the mental equipment by which the defender of religious truth has to fit himself for his task, as also to the practical methods best suited to accomplish it. In regard to both, we believe there is room for some useful suggestions; although what we have to say shall doubtless be found little different from what reflection and experience have already taught to a great many others, especially to those who have been instrumental, to any extent, in delivering the souls of their fellow-men from doubts and perplexities in matters of belief, or in winning them back from human error to divine truth.

## I.

The manner and the measure of knowledge requisite in the apologist vary indefinitely with the mental condition and culture of those to whom he expects to be helpful. In a general way it may be said that objections are of two kinds; learned or popular. By learned objections, we mean those which are suggested by that deeper knowledge which is the privilege of a few. By popular objections, we mean those which are within the reach of the ordinary mind, and which, besides, have something plausible in them that easily wins the assent of the unreflecting and unenlightened.

To begin with the latter, by far the most important, on account of their widespread influence, it is clear that what the apologist needs, in order to dispose of them, is not so much knowledge, as that quickness and versatility of thought by which he may accommodate himself, instinctively as it were, to the manner of minds he has to deal with, — to divine, under their loose and incoherent statements, the real difficulty that disturbs them, and, in a

clear, striking manner, effectually to dispel it. This indeed implies familiarity with the prevailing notions of the multitude; and to remain in touch with them the apologist has to keep a steady eye on the influences which form public opinion in religious matters, such as the utterances of public men, the spirit and views of the books and newspapers which are most read, etc. He has, besides, to ascertain, once for all, but as thoroughly as he can, the real facts, whether scientific, Biblical, or historic, in connection with the prevailing objections against religion. Once master of them, he is in a position to correct the mistakes, to remove the prejudices, to explode the sophisms which mislead the popular mind, to separate truth from falsehood, and to show himself considerate and fair even toward those whom it is his duty to combat.

Regarding what we have called the learned objections, it is clear that the higher knowledge which originates them is in some measure necessary to meet them. The specialist in many cases is alone competent to test the facts, to weigh the evidence, to determine the value of proofs and conclusions. Only the mind trained in the methods of history can form a personal judgment on many historical problems. Only the philologist can rightly appreciate the strength or weakness of deductions based on a comparative study of languages. And so it is in the other branches of knowledge. The fully equipped apologist has therefore to be a specialist. At the least he must be acquainted with the general principles of the science in which the objection takes its rise. Only thus can he attempt to solve it, or claim any authority to deal with it. Nothing is more humiliating than to see apologists struggling with difficulties they only imperfectly understand, failing to see what is really strong in them, hesitating and

confused in their replies, or striving to make up by bluster for their inability to meet them directly.

But this suggests a serious practical difficulty. For, on the one hand, as we have seen, objections may arise from all the principal forms of human knowledge; whilst, on the other hand, it is impossible for any single mind to compass them all.

The difficulty is real; it is, in fact, insuperable, as regards individuals. No individual man can cover the whole field, or be held as a complete representative of Christian Apologetics. But what is beyond the grasp of one may be compassed by several. Corresponding to each science connected with revelation, let there be a special apologist. Let the historical difficulties be met by the student of history, the philosophical problems by a thinker. Let the Bible bring together the philologist, the scientist, all those who can speak out with authority in its defense. The possession of such men to fight her battles is unquestionably one of the greatest permanent needs of the Church. To multiply their numbers and spread them through the length and breadth of this great country is one of the objects of all higher education. It is pre-eminently that of our Catholic University, whose efforts in the special direction of Apologetics have already begun to bear fruit, and cannot fail to do so more and more abundantly, with the gradual expansion of that great and hopeful institution.

One of its greatest benefits will be to establish in the higher spheres of mental activity that co-ordination and combination of the intellectual forces devoted to the cause of truth, without which they lose much of their power and efficacy. In a few years hence, a large body of men of distinguished merit and acknowledged authority, representing, not merely, as now, the various branches of sacred



science, but all the higher forms of human knowledge, will meet within its walls to labor together for the cause of truth, human and divine ; each one a master in his special sphere of knowledge, familiar with all its facts, and with all its bearings on revealed religion, ever ready to supply to colleague, pupil, or inquirer the most accurate data of his department, to tell him the true value of the newest speculations, and to enable him to set aside the unwarranted assumptions that so often claim recognition under the name of science.

Such centres of human learning, guided by Christian principles, are invaluable for the defense of the faith. But the Christian apologist is by no means entirely dependent on them. Outside all religious belief, true science is ever ready to testify in its own way to divine truth. For, whilst many of its representatives, in their dislike to religion, scarce ever fail to antagonize it when an occasion offers, sometimes at the expense of accuracy and logic, there are others who, altogether unconcerned as to the religious bearings of their work, lay down with equal authority and sincerity what they consider as proven, or probable, or unfounded.

It is the business of the apologist, when no specialist himself, to ascertain the conclusions reached by specialists in their various fields of research, especially by those to whom no suspicion attaches of a religious bias. The knowledge thus obtained is his best offensive and defensive armor, whenever he is concerned with what we have called "learned objections." For these reach the popular mind only in the shape of statements resting on the authority of those who are supposed to know. To combat them by direct argument, supposing such a thing within the reach of the apologist, would be a waste of time. Besides the

lack of necessary preliminary data, untrained minds are incapable of following close, consecutive reasoning. Their opinions and doubts, even when seemingly based on argument, in reality rest on authority ; and by authority alone can they be won back to truth.

Whenever, therefore, a hostile position has to be assailed, the chief concern of the apologist should be to concentrate against it the combined testimony of those whose name carries weight. The admissions, the concessions, the ready statements, especially of such as are confessedly strangers to religion, seldom fail to carry conviction with them to those who are only concerned to know the truth. It is in this form principally that the defense of religion is most accessible to the busy priest on the mission. With his mind full of plans and his hands full of work, he cannot be expected to undertake anything in the shape of original discussion or research. But his liberal education, classical and technical, has opened his mind to all manner of things. He may be ignorant of much that others know, but he knows how and where knowledge is got. He understands the processes by which it is reached, and by what methods its conclusions may be tested. The conclusions themselves he has only to gather up as he finds them. Books of popular knowledge, easily procured, are there to tell him at any time the prevailing thoughts of the day on almost every subject bearing on religion ; whilst, week after week, the periodicals bring him intelligence of the newest views and the newest discoveries, with the discussions they have given rise to, and the conclusions to which they seem to lead.

The priests of whom we speak, thus ever enlarging steadily their store of knowledge, each for himself, might add considerably to its extent and to its value by coming

together, and comparing the results they have reached. We have known such gatherings in various countries, where, for years, priests of the same city or within easy reach of one another, contrived to meet frequently, bringing with them the fruits of their spare hours of study and of their various experiences of life, and seeking together the best solutions to the difficulties which they had met in the books or in the minds of their contemporaries.

Similar combinations would not be impossible among the priests of this country, hard worked and overburdened as most of them are. To improve even on the system would be possible and desirable. In the literature of the day — book, review, and daily newspaper — we are constantly lighting on misrepresentations and mistakes detrimental to religion. Damaging statements are boldly set forth on the slenderest grounds. Views of the most fanciful kind are given as unquestionable and unquestioned. Facts are exaggerated or distorted or ignored to suit the convenience of the writer or the tastes of his readers. Why could we not have among the members of our clergy men who, combining with the work of the ministry some one branch of special study, might be expected, and would ever be ready, to speak out — directly, happily, and promptly — as often as the Church and her beliefs are assailed in the name of Biblical criticism, history, or any other form of human knowledge? Numberless errors in connection with the faith, which remain in possession of the public mind because nobody has taken the pains publicly to correct or contradict them, would be promptly laid to rest by the timely protest of such men. Even those who mislead others in good faith, because they have themselves been misled, would gladly recall their unwarranted statements; whilst the less scrupulous, if taken to task whenever they

falter, would become less reckless in their assertions, and learn to live in salutary fear.

Such action we believe to be possible in many of the dioceses of this country. It would naturally devolve in a great measure on the younger members of the clergy; but among those of riper years some should be found to lend to it their authority and their experience, and even take an active share in its labors. A bishop could do much more still; and to draw forth, in this and other similar shapes, the mental powers — great, as the present writer has reason to know, but too often imperfectly developed — of his more gifted priests, would be one of the most lasting benefits he could confer on his whole clergy and on the Church at large.

## II.

The methods of Apologetics which we have now to consider are so dependent on the nature of the difficulties to be met, on the mental dispositions and culture of those with whom the apologist is concerned, on the cast of mind of the apologist himself, that a definite and complete set of rules cannot for a moment be thought of. But there is room for certain practical recommendations, which, though plain enough, are so often lost sight of, that it may be useful to note them afresh.

1. The first condition of success for the apologist is that he shall realize accurately and fully the difficulty as it appears to the mind of the objector. He is the physician of a diseased intellect; unless he thoroughly understands the nature of the malady, he cannot expect to cure it. He may put forth many true and beautiful things, excellent curatives, but for somebody else than the patient before him. To understand the mental troubles and per-



plexities of others requires intellectual sympathy, a certain power to dismiss one's own point of view and see things from another. Short of this, we may confute others; we cannot persuade them. The secret of persuasion consists principally in starting with opponents from their point of view, and gently leading them to one's own. No man can be expected to yield so long as he feels he is not understood. But if in his opponent he finds a readiness to acknowledge what is true or admissible or plausible in his position, he will be generally found not unwilling to give a fair hearing to what is said on the opposite side. This is, after all, only one of the numberless applications of the golden rule: "If you wish to win a man to your manner of thinking, never hurt his feelings."

2. Another consists in always giving our opponent credit for being in good faith, unless the contrary be manifest. In reality there is far less than is commonly supposed of deliberate resistance to truth in the minds of unbelievers, and any imputation to that effect can only serve to close their hearts to the truth.

3. Fairness in argument is another condition of success. The opposite course may secure to the apologist an easier escape from a difficulty, or a victory, in some disputed point; but far from recommending his case to the unbeliever, it produces exactly the opposite effect.

It may be allowable sometimes to evade certain inconvenient facts or arguments; for the objection is often much easier to understand than the reply by which it may be satisfactorily met. In such cases commonplace generalities may be the best replies. But they are of little avail when the difficulty is clearly realized by the unbeliever; and all attempts to question proven facts or minimize genuine objections are sure to do far less good than evil.

4. Neither would it serve any better the cause of religious truth to imitate those who, leaving out of sight the wonderful results of modern research, and alive only to the controversies or mistakes of scientists and scholars, would fain dismiss the latter without a hearing.

For, besides its innate unreasonableness, such method might be easily turned against religion itself. The unbeliever might claim that theologians too are often uncertain and divided, that they have often committed themselves to foolish and contradictory things. Is religion on that account to be set aside as unworthy of being listened to? Indeed, the principle implied, if carried out logically, would do away with all human knowledge, for in every one of its forms, the certain and the uncertain, the true and the false, have often met together. Laughable stories may be told of the mistakes of astronomers, physicists, etc., but surely such mistakes, however calculated to discredit individuals, are powerless against the science itself. In the observations and conclusions of geologists, for instance, there has been, especially in the earlier stages of the science, much that a closer attention and better methods have set aside. Dead theories and abandoned speculations lie thickly imbedded in its past, like the extinct species which itself has discovered in the strata of the earth. Yet it advances triumphantly, adding in each decade new and suggestive facts; whilst its main principles have won the respectful assent of all those who have made it the object of an intelligent and careful study. Such sciences cannot be set aside or overlooked. The apologist who shows distrust and dislike for them only injures himself and his cause; and if it were possible that a choice had to be made between them and the faith, it is much to be feared that the world would turn its back on the latter.

5. For the same, as well as for many other obvious reasons, the apologist should be careful not to commit religion to his personal, and perhaps mistaken, conception of its position and teachings. Struck with the evils likely to follow from such a tendency if not duly guarded against, S. Augustine has pointed them out in terms so forcible that we may well repeat his words here, though already known to most of our readers. "If we find," he says, "anything in divine Scripture that may be variously explained without any injury to the faith, we should not rush headlong by positive assertion either to one opinion or the other, lest, if perchance the opinion we have adopted should afterward turn out to be false, our faith should fall with it. . . . It often happens that one who is not a Christian hath some knowledge derived from the clearest arguments or from the evidence of his senses about the earth, the heavens, and the elements of the world; about the movements and revolutions, the size and distance, of the stars, . . . the nature of animals, plants, and minerals, and other things of a like kind. Now, it is an unseemly and mischievous thing, and greatly to be avoided, that a Christian man, speaking as if according to the authority of Christian Scripture, should talk so foolishly, that the unbeliever on hearing him and observing the extravagance of his error, should with difficulty refrain from laughter. . . . For when they find one belonging to the Christian body falling into error on a subject with which they themselves are thoroughly conversant, and enforcing his groundless opinion by the authority of our sacred books, how are they likely to put trust in these books about the resurrection of the dead, and the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, having already come to regard them as fallacious about those things they had themselves learned

from observation or unquestionable evidence?"<sup>1</sup> Several centuries later S. Thomas<sup>2</sup> repeats the same lesson: "It is most injurious to religion," he says, "to state or to deny in its name what in reality does not belong to it." And having quoted something of the above passage of S. Augustine, he continues, "Hence to me it seems much safer that, when dealing with the common opinions of philosophers which are not opposed to the faith, we should neither oppose them as hostile, or commit ourselves to them as part of that same faith."

6. These last words contain an important caution which should not be lost sight of. In their efforts to reconcile religion and science, our apologists have often been led to seek for a harmony of detail, and of so positive a kind, that the Bible would seem to have anticipated the greatest marvels of modern discovery. But this was only building on moving sand. The scientific theories of which the statement was supposed to be found in the Sacred Writings proved unsound, and were given up for others, thus compelling apologists precipitately to solve the connection, lest they might share in the disaster. It is now generally felt that a negative, not a positive, harmony has to be looked for, and that, instead of attempting to find the secrets of science in the Bible, the true meaning of the Bible where it touches on the things of Nature should be sought for in science.

7. The apologist should not confine himself to solving the difficulties of his opponents; he should assume the offensive; and it will be an easy task for him to show on what weak foundations some of those objections rest which are most noisily thrust forward; how unreasonable adversaries often prove in their exigencies as to proof on the

<sup>1</sup> *De Genesi ad lit.*, I., 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Opusc. IX., Proem.*



opposite side, insisting, for instance, on getting physical proof of historical facts; how often arbitrary and illogical in their methods and conclusions; how much greater the difficulties they commit themselves to by refusing belief, than those the Christian has to meet in believing. Faith in God, in Christ, in the Gospel, in the divine mission of the Church, may give rise to many difficulties, but to deny any one or other of them leads to absurdities. Nothing is weaker or more contemptible than the attempts of unbelievers to explain the undoubted facts of history without any divine interference; and it is the honest acknowledgment of this that has led back many to the faith.

### III.

It remains to devote a few remarks to the methods of dealing with the faithful in this all-important matter.

1. In the great majority of cases it will be found that doubt settles only in the minds of those who are unfaithful to the voice of conscience, and neglect their moral and religious duties. When they return to them, the light comes back of itself.

2. As has been more than once suggested, the people should be solidly grounded from early youth in the most obvious reasons for being Christians and Catholics. They should be taught to avoid the writings which tend to destroy or to weaken the faith, or at least to handle them with caution, and to neutralize their effects by influences of an opposite character, such as reading what is healthy and strengthening to the faith.

3. They should be fortified unceasingly and in various ways against one objection in particular, the most insidious and dangerous of all, and which besets them at every

step in life. It arises first from the vast number of their contemporaries, including men of the highest order of enlightenment, who live and die strangers to the Catholic Church, though her claims must be known to them; strangers, most of them, to all religious beliefs, though in a position to appreciate the value of the proofs upon which they rest, and having the same interest as believers in getting at the truth. The temptation is to conclude that what fails to convince such men can have nothing decisive in its favor, and that, if it continues still to be held by so many, it can be at best only as a probable hypothesis.

The objection arises next from the fact that many of those to whom we refer, non-Catholics or unbelievers, lead seemingly such good, blameless, beautiful lives; that they are trustworthy, true, kind, and helpful in a degree which surpasses what is found in the mass of those who make profession of Christian belief. This suggests naturally the conclusion that religion is not of so much importance as is said; that it may be helpful, but that it can be dispensed with; that, to put it in the words of the poet,-

“He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

To the indifferent it becomes a very plausible motive to abstain from inquiring into the truth of religion, and to those who have neglected its precepts it becomes an excuse for not going back to them.

To deal properly with this difficulty would require a whole article to itself. We can only point it out here as underlying a great deal of the skepticism and indifference of the day. In matters of opinion and belief the multitude is naturally passive. It is moved by tradition, and tradition failing, by what recommends itself as the greatest

authority. In past ages the Church was beyond all comparison the greatest human authority, and as a consequence she was obeyed by all. For all enlightened Catholics she is the greatest authority still. But for the unenlightened, for the lukewarm, for the whole world outside, public opinion, science, human knowledge in its highest representatives, are listened to; and we cannot say that the resultant tone of their teaching is favorable to our beliefs. Hence the absolute necessity of strengthening the minds of believers against them.

4. Finally, it should be impressed on those who possess the faith, and still more on inquirers in search of it, that there is no reason to suspend their judgment until all opposing difficulties have been met. Nobody feels bound to do it in other subjects. Many of the best established truths of philosophy are beset with difficulties which have never been satisfactorily answered. Many undoubted facts of history have given rise to problems which still await a reply. And so it is in the other spheres of human knowledge. When we feel that our convictions are based on solid grounds, we are little concerned about the difficulties connected with them. They may perplex us, if we think of them, but they do not shake our faith in what we have seen to be true; and we leave them to settle themselves. Indeed, it is only on condition of doing so that we remain in possession of truth. For if, on the strength of each fresh difficulty which may arise, the new were ever to unsettle the old, there would be an end to all fixity of human convictions.

Patience is a moral virtue. It is also an intellectual virtue, and never more reasonable than when practiced in connection with the difficulties of the faith. When Christians are satisfied to wait, in most cases the cloud lifts of

itself, and divine truth appears once more in all its brightness and beauty.

*Jam nunc quæ numeras tot tibi vindices,  
Effer religio sidereum caput :  
Quot sunt mota tibi prælia, nobiles  
Tot nectis tibi laureas.*



## CHAPTER IV.

*DOGMATIC THEOLOGY.*

THEOLOGY in general is the scientific and systematic exposition of revealed truth.

At no time has God left man to the unaided resources of his natural faculties. From the very beginning He revealed Himself to our first parents, and made known to them His will; and since then, "at sundry times and in divers manners, He spoke to the Fathers by the prophets, and last of all to us by His Son." <sup>1</sup>

The object of this revelation was mainly, at all times, to enlighten man as to the things connected with his destiny, and to show him the methods and means by which he may reach it. The divine teaching, consequently, at all times, contained two elements, — truths to be reverently and thankfully accepted and believed in; precepts to be submitted to as laws of action and life.

On this difference in the divine manifestations is based, as all know, the distinction between Dogmatic and Moral Theology, the former being concerned with the truths which come from God, the latter with the duties which He imposes upon man. The distinction, though real, and in many ways convenient, was for a long time practically unheeded in the exposition of Christian doctrine, questions of theory and practice being taken up indifferently by the Fathers and by the great scholastic theologians, just as they pre-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i., 1.

sented themselves in the subject under consideration. But inasmuch as it is now, and has been for a considerable period, commonly followed in the schools, we shall conform to it here, dealing separately with dogmatic and with moral studies, but always on the understanding that, whilst separate in conception and as an object of special investigation, they are in themselves indissolubly bound together, each one finding its reason, logical or final, in the other.

In both its branches, the subject is one of grave and solemn interest. Theology deals with the most vital concerns of man. Its purpose is to teach him what he most needs and most wishes to know, — his real position in this world and the true law of his action; the first origin and the ultimate issues of his being. To the great problems of human life and destiny, which philosophy may originate and discuss, but has never been able satisfactorily to settle, revealed science undertakes to give an answer; and, to those who accept the answer as final, its importance is such that beside it all the discoveries of modern science and all the speculations of modern thought dwindle into insignificance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Theology," says F. Faber (*All for Jesus*, VIII. 1), "is the counterpart of physical science. It can tell us quite as wonderful things of the angels whom we have never seen as astronomy can of the stars we can never reach. It can send light farther into the invisible world of spirit, than the microscope can into the invisible world of animal existence. The science of the laws of grace is a parallel to the science of the laws of life. The history and constitution of the Church is as startling in its wonders as are the records of geology. With the help of revelation, the Church, reason, and the light of the Holy Ghost, Catholic theologians have explored spirit with at least as much certainty and success as modern science has explored matter. The immense intellect of man was once directed upon the life of God, His perfections, His incarnation, and His communications of Himself. Revelation gave it countless infallible axioms, and that greatest glory of the human mind, Catholic theology, was the result. The same immense

To be acquainted with the principal data of this science is the business of all. To follow it out in its manifold developments and to see into its depths is the special calling of the priest. Theology is preëminently his form of knowledge. It is at the very centre of his intellectual life; he is its divinely appointed interpreter and guardian. This being so, it might seem superfluous to dwell at any length on the necessity, for all those aspiring to or engaged in the priesthood, to make it a chief object of study; yet we feel that it will not be amiss to do so, especially as regards speculative or Dogmatic Theology.

## ARTICLE I.

### *IMPORTANCE OF DOGMATIC STUDIES.*

The interest which individuals take in any subject, is generally speaking, dependent on the public feeling in its regard, so that even those whose business it is to know all about it are urged on to fresh work, or become negligent and disheartened, according as they find their knowledge appreciated or made light of. Thus, in a society of earnest believers, religious truth is always an object of intense and universal interest.<sup>1</sup> But in proportion as the faith weakens, the interest declines; new subjects arise and carry away

power is now brought to bear upon the currents of the ocean, and the circle of the winds, upon electrical phenomena, and the chemistry of the stars, and the result is wonderful enough in the system of modern science; yet it is hardly so wonderful, even as an exhibition of mental power, as are the summus of scholastic theology."

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to observe the number of distinguished lay scholars, who, in the three last centuries, had made a special study of theology, just as so many to-day in Germany and other countries take to Biblical studies.

men's thoughts in other directions, and what was the engrossing topic of one period is forgotten in another by all but a few.

Now this is just the condition of things in which we find ourselves to-day. The world has become largely indifferent to purely religious doctrine. In its eager investigation of the material universe, it has well-nigh lost its hold on the unseen. It distrusts speculation, and is disposed to look upon as uncertain whatever cannot be experimentally verified. Religion, in its judgment, is merely a matter of feeling, varying in form from one to another, but substantially the same in all. It is helpful, though not indispensable, to goodness; but only as an inspiration, which, itself, is independent of all special belief. In a word, to them religion is valuable and praiseworthy, but special doctrines are of little account.

This doctrinal indifferentism is unhappily not confined to avowed unbelievers. It is rapidly gaining ground among people claiming to be Christians. Indeed positive, definite faith is fast disappearing from most, not to say all, of the religious organizations outside the Catholic Church. This movement, long expected, yet slow to come, has rapidly developed in the present century, and especially within the past and present generations. The principle of private judgment, stayed in its logical development by various causes, is now bearing fruit in the gradual abandonment of all special professions of faith. In the various denominations, the "creeds" are openly modified, or silently dropped, or maintained only as a historical record of what was held by a certain section of Christians at some time in the past, but without any binding force on their successors of the present day. Hence we see many Protestants hold on by the slenderest thread to the "persuasions" to which they



belong, and change their forms and places of worship as a mere matter of taste or convenience; whilst others, though still professing to be Christians, decline to connect themselves with any special form of Christianity. Religion, such as they conceive it, is only a higher sort of life, gathering inspiration from Christ and the Gospel, but independent of all definite belief; a heavenly impulse, at most, but not a doctrine.

Protestant studies, as presently pursued, seem to be moving in the same direction, and leading to the same kind of "undogmatic Christianity." And this again follows logically from the rejection of authority as a guide to belief. Certain courses of thought, certain methods and solutions, may still be directly suggested, but there is logically an end of all dogmatic teaching. Each individual mind being the ultimate judge of what constitutes revealed truth, the only rational course is to supply the student with what can best help him to form his own judgment; the Bible and what facilitates its intelligence, such as Hebrew, Greek, Biblical archeology, history, etc. And this is just what things are coming to. Biblical exegesis, with its critical, historical, and philological apparatus, is fast superseding the older doctrinal studies, with the natural result that, while some settle down passively in the traditional views of the school to which they belong, or of the professors under whom they sit, others, of a more thoughtful, or of a more independent, turn of mind, are lost in perplexities and doubts regarding some of the gravest and most fundamental questions; and, in their inability to extricate themselves therefrom, they are led on to the conclusion that, certitude being unattainable, religion must be made independent of it; and in this way they, too, are landed in "undogmatic Christianity."

The notion is seductive to all those who love broadness and liberality. It permits them to extend the hand of religious fellowship to all men of good will. It disposes of all intellectual difficulties in the matter of belief, and calms the conscience of the doubter. It has worked its way into the minds of some of the most gifted and cultured of the Protestant clergy and laity. There is even a positive danger of its affecting the minds of Catholics. It is conveyed to them in the current literature of the period. They meet it in their daily intercourse with men of cultivated intellect, broad views, and genial disposition, and unconsciously they learn from them to make light of what divides, and to look principally to the common ground on which all may meet and live in harmony. No longer do we find in many, even of those whose faith is still intact, that strong, healthy hatred of heresy and fear of contamination from it which was universal in former times; but too often, in its stead, a disposition to minimize, to compromise,—to extend, in a word, to doctrinal error that charity which is due only to those who are misled by it.

Is there not reason to fear that the same disposition of unworthy compromise with fashionable indifferentism or popular errors may even invade the sanctuary; that the general upheaval of doctrines and confusion of thoughts which are characteristic of our times may disturb the clerical mind also, blurring in it the lines which divide orthodoxy from error, and vaporizing into impalpable spirit the solid truths of the Christian faith? May not the questioning, skeptical spirit which is in the air ascend and settle as a cloud on the heights where priestly thoughts habitually dwell?

If such things are possible, it is well to be alive to them. It is well to remember that, if allowed to develop freely,

they would simply be destructive of all Christianity and in formal opposition to its whole past.

For Christianity means and has always meant primarily and principally a doctrine. Christianity is the teaching of Christ and of His apostles commissioned by him to convey it in its integrity to all mankind, "Teach ye all nations: . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . . He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned. . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism, . . . that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." <sup>1</sup>

It is the acceptance of the doctrine of Christ in its purity and fullness that makes the Christian; any departure from it fills S. Paul with horror. "But though we or an angel from heaven preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." <sup>2</sup> The same feeling runs through all his inspired writings. In his admonition to the elders at Ephesus, to Timothy, to Titus, he denounces in the severest terms those who corrupt the integrity of the faith, calling them wolves, false prophets, proud and reprobate, to be admonished, and if they do not amend to be shunned. <sup>3</sup>

Nor is S. Peter less vehement in his denunciations; and it is the Apostle of Love himself who writes, "If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him God speed you."

This intense earnestness in regard to doctrine, from the Apostles passes on to the early Fathers. We find it from the beginning in the great Bishop of Antioch, S. Ignatius, as he writes to the churches on his way to martyrdom, in-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; Eph. iv. 5, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 29; 1 Tim. vi. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 17; Tit. ii. 11.

culcating unity and purity of faith as the very root of the divine life.<sup>1</sup> "The faith of the Church," says S. Irenæus, "is everywhere the same. Like the sun in the firmament, it sheds the same light all over the world. They who go not to the Church for it, defraud themselves of life. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit is, there is the truth."<sup>2</sup> And so Tertullian, Clement, Cyprian, Origen, and the others. For them any departure from the body of the divine truth held and proclaimed by the Church, is an inexcusable fault, the most grievous of sins, a corrupting and a soul-destroying evil. This is the inspiring thought of the great doctors, Greek and Latin, of the fourth and fifth centuries; indeed, it is that of the great ecclesiastical writers of all times. Most of their works have no other object than to preserve in its purity, to exhibit in all its fullness and beauty, to defend against all attacks, the truth, the whole divine truth, as revealed by God to man.

The Church herself has ever felt that this was the primary object of her mission. At every period of her history we find her still more solicitous to preserve the faith in its purity than to propagate it among men. In the course of ages she may have passed through phases of darkness, intellectual and moral, her champions may have at times lacked earnestness and vigor in their fight against evil; but never do we detect in her the slightest trace of indifference or neglect when the purity or integrity of her faith is assailed. The discordant note of doctrinal error is the one thing to arouse her from momentary torpor, and to intensify all her energies. Like the enemy's trumpet or battle-cry for the sleeping warrior, it brings her at once to her

<sup>1</sup> *Ignat., Ep. ad Ephes.*, v., vi., ix., xiii.; *ad Trall.*, x.; *ad Philad.*, ii., iii., viii.; *ad Smyrn.*, vii.; etc.

<sup>2</sup> *L. iii. c. 24.*



feet, makes her summon hastily her forces, nor will she know peace until the foe has been irrecoverably defeated and crushed. The battle may go on for years or for ages ; she may reckon among her opponents those whom the world most readily follows, or she may find herself one day forsaken by her most trusted friends ; she may lose in the protracted contest the treasures of earth and the favor of kings ; she may have to weep over the noblest and dearest of her children, slain for her cause, — it matters not. To her one particle of divine truth is more than all human favors and worldly goods, more than the brightest prospects held out to a diminished creed. This is the one thing in which she knows no compromise. For this her anchorites, dead to all else, momentarily forsook their desert solitudes ; for this her bishops have come repeatedly from the ends of the earth and sat in council ; for this mainly have her universities been founded ; to this her most gifted sons have devoted their lifelong labors ; and for this she expects that even the humblest of her children should be ready to die.

Christianity, then, is, and always has been, supremely, intensely dogmatic. “Undogmatic Christianity,” or any other form of Christianity in which a clear, definite doctrine holds not a central, essential position, is absolutely unhistorical, foreign to the past, and, whatever else it may be, utterly unlike what the world has so far known and believed in.

Now, since dogma has been at all times the gravest concern of the Church, is it not fitting that at all times it should be an object of special interest and special study for her priests ? For they, as we have already remarked, are its representatives, its guardians, and its teachers ; and none of these can they be, with credit to her or to them-

selves, unless on the condition of an habitual study of her doctrines as close and as consecutive as they can make it. A summary knowledge of it may suffice in a layman, and the more scientific, yet still elementary work of a seminary course may serve the young priest as a beginning, but it needs to be steadily recalled and supplemented. A teacher has always to possess much more knowledge than he imparts. He has to accommodate himself to the ever-varying requirements of individual minds, and, as a consequence, almost at every step, to go below the surface and beyond the traditional forms. With a thorough knowledge of his subject and of its various aspects, he will find no difficulty in doing so, but rather a positive enjoyment. But if his knowledge is confined to formulas imperfectly realized, or is only one-sided and superficial, the manner of conveying it will be stiff, or obscure, or inaccurate. He will dread to expand the words of his text; and if he ventures beyond, it will be only to talk at random, or to wander about in a hesitating, helpless way.

Again, the teacher has not only to set forth a doctrine; he may at all hours be questioned on it. There is scarcely a single point of Christian doctrine which does not give rise, in a thoughtful mind, to numberless queries. Even children want to know about the things of religion ever so much more than is taught them. Many revealed truths suggest difficulties — philosophical, historical, or moral. To meet them satisfactorily may require a knowledge — sometimes a very thorough knowledge — of the grounds upon which the doctrine rests, of the limits to which it extends, of the portions which may be abandoned, and of those which must be held at any cost. Only a thorough, all-round study, made at the outset, can supply such knowledge; and to be in keeping with the growing require-

ments of the age, even that has to be steadily carried forward into a still deeper and more complete view of divine truth as it stands in Sacred Writ and in the mind of the Church, or as it comes back to each one in the daily experiences of life and in the progressive thoughts of men.

Even the preacher needs at every moment to rest his foot on solid dogmatic ground. For, even when addressing himself to the conscience and to the heart, most of his exhortations have a doctrinal basis. It is to the faith of his hearers that he principally appeals, that is, to motives purely dogmatic, such as heaven, hell, the evil of sin, the love of God manifested in Christ, etc. The Christian law, which it is his duty to teach and enforce, flows from a dogmatic source, and ever leads back to it. In short, speculative theology, properly understood, proves to be for the priest the most practical form of knowledge.

Who, having any experience of the sacred ministry, will be tempted to question the fact? Who, in presence of objections or simple inquiry, has not had more than once to acknowledge to himself that his acquaintance with the subject fell considerably short of what would be required for a complete elucidation? Who, in preaching on any favorite subject, has not felt all that a deeper study of it gave of freedom and freshness to his thoughts, of accuracy and clearness to his language? With what ease, once thus equipped, he catches the passing inspiration as it suddenly comes up before him, discerns at a glance what place it can find in his discourse, and at once welcomes or dismisses it! Even the intelligent hearer is not slow to perceive the tact with which he skims lightly, or dwells with emphasis, on the various aspects of his subject, in proportion with their real importance or the need of those to whom he appeals, whilst the less cultivated carry away

with them a grateful sense of seeing more distinctly and realizing more fully than ever before some important truth of religion.

From an entirely different point of view, the habitual study of dogmatic subjects is not less desirable in those members of the clergy whose life is principally devoted to intellectual pursuits of another kind. The study of the sciences for the most part weakens the appreciation of the supernatural. The world of sense shuts out the world of faith. History, in its effort to account for everything by natural influences, accustoms the mind not to look beyond. The physical sciences, causing it to dwell perpetually amid primitive forces, unvarying laws, and facts which they give birth to and serve to explain, give a look of unreality to facts of a different kind. And then, in the course of their personal investigations, or in the wake of their leaders, they are placed not infrequently in presence of facts and conclusions out of harmony with commonly received opinions, or even with what seems to be the teaching of Scripture or of the Church.

We know what happens to the Protestant investigator in such cases. Either he loses completely his hold on Christian belief; or he is led on to modify it indefinitely with the varying results of his inquiries, giving up one point after another, until there remains of his original faith but a shadow and a name. The Catholic priest is not beyond the reach of similar temptations. Many have emerged from the study of philosophical, historical, Biblical problems with convictions weakened and sometimes shattered in matters of belief. To preserve them entire, nothing serves, humanly speaking, like a strong, solid grasp, such as careful study gives, of the grounds of Christian and Catholic faith, and of Dogmatic Theology with its immova-



ble basis, its close organic structure, its degrees of certitude, and its subtle distinctions between which room is found for so much more than is commonly imagined. For all those who venture on certain dangerous tracks of modern investigation, in it is to be found the guiding light, the safeguard, the ever open refuge in the hour of darkness and doubt.

We may, therefore, safely conclude that no subject of mental pursuit is more adapted to the sacerdotal life than that of Dogmatic Theology. The priest is not only mentally but spiritually benefited by it. Like meditation and prayer, the habitual contact of the mind with revealed truth gives him a deeper sense of its reality, and keeps alive the conviction of its supreme importance.<sup>1</sup> Finally, it gives the priest a stronger hold on the mind of others. Religious truth is losing its power over our age, and to some extent over our people. The younger generations, growing or already grown up into manhood and womanhood, have no longer that boundless trust of their forefathers for whatever comes from the lips of a priest. They need more freedom of thought, more reasonableness, more proof in regard to what is proposed to their belief. They think more actively and less reverently than people did of

<sup>1</sup> Even as a help to the spiritual life of the priest himself, dogmatic theology well deserves to be an object of constant study. "All doctrine is practical," says F. Faber (*Conf. iii.*). "The first use of dogmatic theology is to be the basis of sanctity, while controversy is its fiftieth or its hundredth use." And again (*Precious Blood, C. iii.*), "Theology would be a science to be specially impatient with, if it rested only in speculation. To my mind it is the best fuel of devotion, the best fuel of divine love. It catches fire quickest; it makes least smoke; it burns longest; and it throws out most heat while it is burning. If a science tells of God, yet does not make the listener's heart burn within him, it must follow either that the science is no true theology, or that the heart which listens is stupid and depraved. In a simple and loving heart, theology burns like a sacred fire."

old. Their teachers are useful to them in proportion to the fullness and firmness with which they have grasped the truths of Christianity, and to the tact with which they know how to present and to sustain them.

A boundless field is here opened to priestly activity, and it remains for us to see how it may be best cultivated.

## ARTICLE II.

### *DOGMATIC THEOLOGY — CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE.*

Considered in its object, Dogmatic Theology is the highest and noblest of studies. It deals with the most important of all problems ; it has engaged the greatest intellects of Christian ages ; its conclusions concern the whole human race, and stretch out from time into eternity. Yet the general absorbing interest which it excited in former times has in a great measure disappeared. It is still learnt as a necessary preparation for the priesthood ; but of those who are thus initiated into it, comparatively few make it an object of special study in after-life.

This practical disregard arises from diverse causes. Besides the abstract character of its truths, and the dryness of its forms, theology, such as it is taught in the schools or found in books, proves to some minds unsatisfactory and disappointing. It strikes them as being full of arbitrary assumptions ; often weak or conventional in proof ; busy with speculations arising from conditions of mind which have become foreign to the present age ; and silent on the questions to which the men of to-day seek an answer. Again, there are those who never go back to dogmatic studies, not because they question their solidity or their

usefulness, but because they find nothing in them of the attractiveness which new facts, fresh thought, expansiveness, and life give to most modern forms of knowledge. Theology, as understood by them, is a science fixed long since in all its points and bearings, to be learned, like elementary mathematics, once for all, and after that to be reverted to as little as one thinks of revising his geometry or his algebra.

Candor forbids us to say that there is nothing in the past or in the present of theology to lend color to such impressions. But we believe that they arise from what is accidental in the science, not from its essence; and this, we hope, will become sufficiently apparent as we endeavor briefly to recall something of the true nature, of the laws, the limitations, and the methods of theology, as a science and as a study.

The objection of unprogressiveness, to begin with, arises and can arise only from an imperfect conception of what theology really is. For, of its very nature, theology is equally subject to two distinct laws or tendencies, the law of conservation, and the law of development and consequent progress. As directed by human hands, either of the two tendencies may be developed at the cost, even to the destruction, of the other; but always with detriment to the science itself. The progressive tendency, if unchecked, would soon emancipate it from authority, and do away with all definite, settled beliefs; while pure conservatism would lead only to stagnation. The true course of theology, therefore, like that of the heavenly bodies through space, is found in due obedience to two distinct, and in some sense antagonistic, forces. But we have to see in what manner and measure each of these forces should come into play.

## I

First of all, then, Catholic theology is bound to be, and has always been, strongly conservative. It is conservative like all that rests on authority. It is conservative because its primary law is to cling indissolubly to whatever it recognizes as an undoubted element of divine truth or as an evident consequence of it. It clings instinctively, though with weaker hold, to what bears even the semblance of divine truth. The literal meaning of Scripture, if otherwise admissible; views commonly held by the Fathers; conclusions which have commended themselves to theologians of every school; time-honored traditions, — toward all these Catholic theology leans ostensibly, and resents any irreverent or arbitrary action in their regard.

Again, it shows a decided preference for certain methods of exposition or defense long in use, for certain forms of language, and for the special vocabulary in which divine truths have become enshrined in the course of ages; even for the proofs originally introduced with effect by the Fathers in support of any Christian doctrine and reverently repeated by subsequent generations. In short, Catholic theology turns ever lovingly to the past, and parts reluctantly with whatever has stood the test of time, or has come down under the sanction of authority in any degree.

Confined within these limits, the tendency is above reproach, for it only applies the universal rules of intellectual prudence and common sense. But there is such a thing as blind conservatism, and theologians are not necessarily exempt from it. They may cling obstinately to antiquated notions, and go on repeating confidently weak, or even exploded arguments. They may, by unconscious exaggerations, extend the immutability and sacredness of



divine truth to solutions and speculations which are but human; and, in their eagerness to preserve in its integrity the deposit of the faith, they may allow it to be overladen with worthless accretions which destroy, instead of enhancing, its purity and beauty.

Another feature of the conservative spirit is this: As it clings to what is old, so it dreads and dislikes what is new; and in this respect again Catholic theology is true to its origin. *Quod audistis ab initio in vobis permaneat*, writes S. John;<sup>1</sup> and S. Paul: *Depositum custodi, devitans profanas vocum novitates*.<sup>2</sup> Heretics are always spoken of by the Fathers as innovators, and all new doctrines they look upon as a departure from, or, at the least, an addition to, the purely divine deposit of the faith. The objections most strongly urged against the nascent heretics was the fact of their being new. Divine truth being first in possession, error could come only as a novelty. Hence the maxim of Tertullian: *Illud verius quod prius*; and the statement of S. Augustine: *Sola evangelica doctrina per excellentiam antiqua dicitur, ad invidiam falsæ quæ nova appellatur. . . . Semper viris sanctis suspecta fuit novitas*.<sup>3</sup> Yet here again there was room for exaggeration. For, although divine revelation closed with the apostolic age, so that all doctrines of later date, and having no root in the past, could at best be looked upon only as human speculations; still, an advance in various directions remained possible, as we shall see, which theologians have too often been slow to recognize, and have admitted, when driven to it, in too limited a measure. How often do we find them proceeding unconsciously on the principle that theology has long since said all it had to say, and can henceforth only repeat itself! Such of them as are of this

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 24.<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 19.<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Cresconium*, III. 59.

disposition cease to think for themselves, or even to listen to those who think around them. They grow impatient with the vivid side-lights which break in upon them from new discoveries and altered judgments in the Biblical or historical sciences, and carefully shut them out. They know already what to think on every important subject. At most, they may go back to one of the Fathers or to some favorite theologian; and their sole aim, if they teach, is to transmit what they have thus learned, and as they learned it, following the same unvarying round of statements, proofs, corollaries, questions, and answers, all definitive and, as a consequence, stereotyped and unchangeable.

If theology meant this and nothing more, we should hardly wonder to see it forsaken for more living and hopeful forms of knowledge. Happily, when brought back to its true condition, it appears entirely different. We are no longer in presence of a torpid, lethargic system of ideas, but of a science overflowing with vigor and life, and ever inciting to new thought; as admirably progressive as it is truly conservative; as youthful in its eager curiosity and active researches as it is staid in its demeanor and venerable in its years.

## II.

For progressiveness, as we have said, is a quality no less inherent to theology than its characteristic conservatism. "Shall we say," exclaims Vincent of Lerins, "that religion (i.e., religious doctrine) is unprogressive in the Church of God? Far from it, the opposite is the fact. Faith is ever progressive, but ever unchanging, for progress means development without loss of identity." "It grows," he goes on to explain, "as childhood and youth

grow into manhood, as the seed sown in the ground grows into the full ripeness of the harvest.”<sup>1</sup> The whole chapter should be read. It is the most remarkable in this connection that antiquity has left us. Vincent exhibits in it a keen intuition of the general law, and of the lines on which it works itself out. Let us endeavor to mark them more distinctly.

Considered simply as an object of human thought, theology is progressive, for all thought is of itself indefinitely expansive. Principles are inexhaustible in their consequences, and facts, properly interrogated, are suggestive of endless conclusions. All geometry is evolved out of a few simple axioms; and the highest laws of the universe were revealed to Newton by the falling of an apple. The mind of a man is a soil in which all new truth germinates and fructifies. No principle, no fact, can enter into it without coming into contact with its antecedent elements, and combining with them in an endless variety of shapes, each combination resulting in some new truth or some new aspect of truth which, in turn, may become the principle of other combinations, more or less numerous or valuable in proportion as the mind is more active or the truth more pregnant. A single view may permeate, transform, and expand indefinitely a whole science, as the theory of gravitation has done in astronomy, that of the conservation of energy in physics, or the principle of evolution in biology.

Can we imagine divine truth entering the mind of man without giving rise to a similar action and reaction, and with results in proportion with the interest which it awakened and with the breadth of the field over which it ranged? Indeed, it is in this way that theology came into existence. For theology is but revelation submitted to the

<sup>1</sup> *Commonit.*, Cap. xxiii.

normal processes of the human intellect; and we might picture to ourselves beforehand the way in which the operation would be carried out.

God vouchsafed to speak to men, not to satisfy their curiosity, but to lead them to a higher life, of which He Himself was to be the end. The knowledge thus imparted was not given all together, nor in logical order, nor always explicitly and distinctly. Great truths were often but vaguely and, as it were, incidentally enunciated; facts and laws of the unseen world were but dimly shown; there were suggestions about God and his purposes, man and his destinies, enough to reveal to him the solemn seriousness of life, too little to satisfy his awakened curiosity. Even after Christ had come and His Apostles had echoed the divine message, there remained an unordered collection of doctrines, facts, intimations, some distinct and definite, others only implicit or uncertain; and even when put together, still incomplete and fragmentary.

Now, we see at once what will be the action of the mind in presence of knowledge reaching it in conditions so little in keeping with its natural requirements. Its first impulse will be to look to what is most vital in the divine message, to dispel, so far as may be, what is obscure in its nature or in its expression, to realize its full meaning, and to follow it out in its speculative and in its practical consequences.

The next effort will be to find a reply to the many questions which revelation gives rise to, but fails to answer; to complete, in other words, a system of knowledge which God chose to leave imperfect. For in what interests the mind, imperfect knowledge always seeks to complete itself. Where direct information is unattainable, the usual methods of discovery are appealed to: induction and deduction, or



the less satisfactory processes, leading only to imperfect knowledge, such as analogical argument, hypothesis, conjecture, and the like. Where there is question of divine truth it will be chiefly sought for in the speculations of the Fathers, or in the intimations, however vague, of Sacred Writ.

Lastly, in minds fashioned by the logical methods of Greece and Rome, there will be a need to establish order and consecutiveness among the unconnected elements thus brought together, and to fashion them into a complex, yet real organic unity.

Now this, we need hardly say, is exactly the course of development which divine revelation has followed in the lapse of ages. Its fundamental teachings were the first to be determined in all their purity and fullness, and this was the great dogmatic work of the five or six first centuries of the Christian era. The deduction of their ultimate consequences, and the evolution of that vast body of current doctrines which never rose to the dignity of dogmatic faith, though early begun, belong mainly to a subsequent period. Organization came last, being almost entirely the work of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

From these facts we may already appreciate the value of the current notion, that the light of divine truth was at its brightest in the early days of the Church. From the nature of the case, as well as from the history of doctrine, we see that this can be true only in a very qualified sense. The Apostles themselves, during the lifetime of our Lord, had understood His doctrines but very imperfectly; and on the eve of His death He told them expressly<sup>1</sup> that many things remained to be taught them which they were still unfit to receive, and that this was to be the work of the

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 12.

Spirit about to come upon them. The measure of enlightenment imparted to them on His coming was undoubtedly great; it was surely equal to the purpose for which they had been chosen. More than that we cannot know. There is no sufficient reason to believe that they were all equally enlightened. S. Peter, referring to S. Paul, seems to imply that his gifts were of a higher order, and the writings of the great Apostle convey a similar conclusion. Neither do they appear to have received together all the lights which their subsequent ministry might require, nor to have understood at once its full scope and purpose, else the visions of S. Peter<sup>1</sup> would have been needless. At no time can they be supposed to have perceived the numberless consequences which it took ages to deduce from the great truths which it was their privilege to convey to mankind. The main doctrines of the faith they doubtless saw with a distinctness and a vividness scarce ever to be equalled; but unless we suppose their minds to have been totally withdrawn from the ordinary laws of the human intelligence, much must have remained in them to the end imperfect and undeveloped.

This was clearly the case with those who came after them. Side by side with doctrines already distinctly conceived, and as accurately formulated as at any subsequent period, we find darkness, hesitation, sometimes positive error, in regard to truths proclaimed later on as an undoubted portion of the divine heritage. Hundreds of African and Eastern bishops, with S. Cyprian as their leader, denied or doubted that baptism could be conferred validly by any but the orthodox. The doctrine of the Trinity was explicitly believed in from the beginning, yet from the time it became the object of active, searching thought, it took the Church more than a century to train

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. xi.

her children to think and speak of it with accuracy. Christ was known from the first to all Christians as the very centre of their religion ; yet the full intelligence of His twofold nature and of the true relations in which His divinity and His humanity stood to one another came only after much ardent controversy and the holding of many councils.

The same may be said of the doctrines of grace, of the sacraments, of original sin, and of many others. The starting-point is a sort of general conception of the divine truth, substantially correct, but obscure or vague, or involved in some other truth in which it is seen but dimly. To make it distinct, reflection is necessary ; and reflection arises from the natural working of the mind, or still more from contradiction. For just as the loss of what is dear to us serves most to reveal its value, so opposition to our implicit convictions serves but to bring them out with distinctness and vigor. It is in this way that heresy has done more than aught else to give precision and emphasis to orthodox doctrine.

Yet it must be admitted that most of what is called Catholic theology came into existence in answer, not to heresy, but to the craving of the Christian mind to know more of the divine economy and of things unseen than God had chosen directly to reveal. How much, for instance, one longs to know, yet how little we are told in Holy Writ, of the original condition of our first parents, and of the abiding consequences of their fall ! Again, can anything be of more interest to the believer than what concerns heaven, purgatory, or hell ? What more calculated to arouse his curiosity than that invisible world of angelic spirits, amidst which he is taught that he lives and moves as really as amid his earthly surroundings ?

To these and to hundreds of similar questions theology undertook to give a reply ; and it must be acknowledged that in the performance of the task a wonderful amount of sagacity has been displayed. To pierce the darkness and compensate for the lack of positive information, the faintest rays of light were brought together, — expressions of the sacred writers, suggestions of the Fathers, principles of philosophy, facts of history, the laws of human nature, and the experiences of life ; every known source of knowledge was appealed to, and made to help in solving the countless questions which arose. The results thus reached are often marvelous when compared with the original information from which they have been evolved. We admire the ingenuity of the archæologist reconstructing a whole inscription from a few broken and incoherent words. We follow with keen interest the historian, as he gathers information from all sides, and of all degrees of trustworthiness, tests them with his intuitive critical gift, expands and supplements them by means of his broader knowledge and his constructive historic imagination, and thus on the groundwork of hopelessly imperfect annals, builds up a consecutive history, which we feel to be substantially true. The work of the theologian, pursued by similar methods, is not less deserving of admiration nor less fruitful in its results. These results may vary in their intrinsic value from what is morally certain to what is merely conjectural ; but as a whole they meet one of the most imperative demands of the Christian mind, and add much to the invaluable treasure of religious doctrine.

This accounts for the readiness and even real delight with which the Fathers, and later on the great theologians, devote themselves to that manner of inquiry, revealing the incessant working of their own minds, and the endless



questioning of others, on the great problems of the supernatural order. To confine ourselves to single instances, it is easy to see that many of the more valuable contributions of S. Augustine to Christian thought were elicited by the questions which came to him from all parts of the Church, and that most of the problems dealt with by S. Thomas were originated before him and around him.

### III.

Theology, then, is progressive, essentially progressive, not after the fashion of the physical sciences, but like history and philosophy, upon which it is mainly built. It has grown, like all living things, by gradual expansion of what first appeared but in embryo. The work of Christian ages has been to emphasize what was clear from the beginning, to draw out what was involved, to elucidate what was obscure, to give accuracy, precision, logical coherence to what was but vague and unconnected, to convey to the mass of Christians truths which in the origin were confined to a few churches or to a few minds. It was pursued very unequally. There were periods of extreme activity, such as the third, fourth, and fifth centuries in the early Church, and the twelfth and thirteenth in the Middle Ages, followed in each case by periods of seeming exhaustion. The Greek mind, so active and so fertile in the beginning, becomes utterly stagnant and barren after the sixth century. The Latin Church, overrun by the barbarians, loses the traditions as well as the practical requirements of progressive thought. A sense of their inferiority as compared with the brilliant past of the preceding ages seems to forbid men to think for themselves in anything bearing on religion, or to attempt seeing beyond

what had been seen before them. Their reverence for the Fathers is unbounded. To gather in as much as possible of their knowledge and wisdom for the benefit of present and future generations is their only object; and theology in their hands becomes like the hieratic arts of ancient Egypt or of mediæval Greece, where the sole aim of the artist was to reproduce conventional types of gods or of saints, without any freedom to modify the traditional forms, or to display his own individual conceptions or tastes.

This passive, quiescent state of mind disappeared, as we know, before the great scholastic movement, characterized, especially in its beginnings, by extraordinary intellectual power and originality of thought. Curiously enough, it reappeared, at least as a theory, with the greatest innovation of Christian ages, the so-called Protestant Reformation, its originators claiming to gather their whole faith ready made from the Bible, and refusing to take heed of all else. We find it often since giving a special tone to certain Catholic schools, less, however, as an avowed principle, than as the instinct of a conservative and sometimes narrow orthodoxy. But the whole trend of modern thought, even in theological schools, is against it; and the historical study of Christian doctrines has already dealt it a blow from which it cannot recover.

Of itself the progressive movement is destined to go on indefinitely, and can be stayed only by accidental and transient circumstances. However much has been done, much more remains to do. The eternal problems of the divine nature and of the human soul are ever before us, beckoning to us, as it were, and tempting us to try our strength upon them. The greatest intellects, it is true, have grappled with them unsuccessfully. Yet, although

they failed to wrest their secret, still they have lifted something of the dark cloud which hung around them, and left a hope that more may be done. Anyhow, it is contrary to the nature of man, having a sense of intellectual power, to settle down contentedly in unsolved mystery.

Again, there are problems long since solved after a fashion, but never in a way to give full satisfaction to the mind. Such are those that gather around divine Providence, prayer, grace, predestination, etc. It is the delight of the vigorous and original thinker to try his strength on them, and prepare, even if he cannot reach, a complete solution. But still more inviting and more pressing are the questions which arise from the general progress of human thought in its bearing on revealed truth. The mind of man is steadily advancing in certain directions, and shifting its ground in others. History, philosophy, Biblical criticism, social science, every new departure or new development of mind, has something new to say or to ask regarding religion. It is the mission of theology to answer, and the task is simply endless. The whole field of historical theology opened up by the French theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Petau, Thomassin, Morin, Vitasse, etc., and renovated in our day by Newman, Oxenham, Klee, Kuhn, etc., still remains rich in promise, and, in many of its departments, comparatively untouched.

There are many other aspects in the sacred science which call no less for renovation. We shall touch upon them later on ; but enough has been already said to show that theology is something entirely different from these cold, lifeless forms under which it has been so often worshiped by some and avoided or forsaken by others, and that, besides being the noblest and most important, it becomes, when properly understood, one of the most attractive forms

of study, still retaining, after its evolution through so many ages, all the suppleness and buoyancy as well as the progressive spirit of youthful life.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *HOW AFFECTED BY MODERN CRITICISM.*

Theology in its elements is as old as the human race ; in its organized form it reckons many centuries ; it has been the object of more powerful, concentrated thought than any other science, and yet it is ever growing. It grows, not as inorganic bodies increase, by the mere fortuitous addition of similar elements, but rather by the more subtile process of assimilation, after the fashion of living things ; that is, by steadily taking into its substance new, vitalizing matter, and silently dropping what proves worthless or has exhausted its vivifying power. Hence a constant renovation which is destined to go on as long as the vital functions continue, — that is, as long as enlightened minds are busy with divine truths ; and which can cease only when theologians have ceased to think.

The process is ordinarily slow and almost imperceptible, like all living growth ; yet it has its periods of special and visible activity. Such was the golden age of the Fathers ; or that of the early schoolmen ; or, again, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which witnessed the efflorescence of positive theology ; and such undoubtedly is the period to which we belong. For this is a time of universal criticism, that is, of a thorough, independent investigation and discussion of origins, documents, proofs, etc. ; and criticism, constructive and destructive, leads directly to altered views



of things. Its effects are already deep and widespread in the various departments of Biblical, historical, and philosophical science; and these being the very sources from which theology flows, it is only natural that in the latter we should notice corresponding signs of change, and anticipate greater still in the future.

It is to the nature and results of this change that we propose to call the attention of the reader.

### I.

In order to allay the fears which the very name of change in connection with theology is calculated to awaken in certain minds, it is only necessary to recall the fact, that theology comprises a great variety of elements of very unequal value, — dogmas of faith, current doctrines, opinions freely debated, theories, inferences, conjectures, proofs of all degrees of cogency, from scientific demonstration down to intimations of the feeblest kind, — and that, as a consequence, the Catholic mind may assume, in theological matters, according to the object it considers, every conceivable attitude, from the most unhesitating acceptance to the most radical negation. This is always a surprise to Protestants who come to know of it for the first time. They are utterly unprepared to find so many questions of a religious character on which Catholics feel at liberty to disagree, and are, as a fact, often at variance. To those among them who enter the Catholic Church with the hope of finding there a definite answer to all their questionings, it is sometimes a source of considerable disappointment. Even those of the faith experience occasionally something of a similar feeling. Diversity of opinion among their teachers disturbs them, and makes them feel as if all were questioned and unsettled.

Not so the more enlightened among them. They know that much liberty of opinion always prevailed in the Catholic schools ; that around the solid kernel of revealed truth fully ascertained, there has been from the beginning, and in increasing measure, a floating mass of doctrinal elements, some of which in the course of time have clung to the centre, others have disappeared, while many more of doubtful character still remain, equally liable to vanish, or to be incorporated, or to continue floating and unsettled to the end.

They know, furthermore, that, whilst defined doctrines admit of no questioning, the proofs which are alleged in support of them are far from being all beyond question ; and that it is not only the right, but the duty, of theology to discuss them critically, and ascertain their real value.

They know, finally, that even when a doctrine has been defined, the full sense of the definition may still be far from determined. The Pope, for example, has been declared infallible ; yet how many questions are still agitated as to the sphere and to the conditions of his infallibility ! The inspiration of Scripture is a dogma of faith ; but it would seem as if we were farther than ever from agreeing as to just what is implied in that fact. Indeed, in this particular instance, as in many others, the Church by her definition scarcely more than echoes the language of Scripture itself, or of tradition, without attempting to develop its meaning, or to remove the ambiguity that may attach to it. This remains for theologians to accomplish ; and we can well understand how its performance gives rise to deep disagreement and lively controversy.

May we not add that, although the higher truths of faith transcend the powers of the human mind, the Church in formulating them can use only human language, always

inadequate, inaccurate often, if accepted too literally or pressed too closely ; and that the development of the Christian mind may lead after-ages to a closer approximation, in expression as well as in thought, to these truths as they are in the mind of God? After all, the language of the Bible, as well as that of the Church, is only a human garb of divine thought — forms wrought out of a certain conception or philosophy of human things, and applied in due time to things divine, as we see in the visible impress of the Jewish, the Greek, or the scholastic mind on the various dogmatic definitions of the past. May we not imagine a further progress which would enable theologians, while faithful to the substantial meaning of such definitions, from which it can never be allowable to depart,<sup>1</sup> to retranslate them into something still more in harmony with a new and advanced state of the human mind, as well as with the unchanging, eternal truth? However it may be with this latter point, which concerns only future and probably distant contingencies, enough margin surely remains in the rest for considerable changes in theology which the most orthodox cannot object to; and it behooves us to see on what lines and in what measure they are happening, and will continue to be made.

## II.

As regards the ascertained doctrines of the Catholic faith, modern criticism, fairly conducted, cannot weaken them. They rest ultimately on the authority of the Church, and no progress of thought, no discovery, can shake them on that immovable basis. Far from shunning inquiry in their regard, the true believer invites it. A

<sup>1</sup> *Conc. Vat. Const.*, I. c. 4.

critical discussion of proofs may, indeed, and often will, do away with spurious authorities and weak reasons by which honest ignorance or mistaken zeal have endeavored to strengthen positions sufficiently safe by themselves; but sacred truth gains more than it loses by their elimination. In the same way, texts of Scripture which were triumphantly brought forward in former times in support of fundamental doctrines may, under the close scrutiny of our own day, prove of very questionable authenticity or of very dubious meaning; yet the doctrines will lose nothing thereby of their indubitable character. What if the ablest modern critics reject the *Tres sunt . . .* of S. John? Is the Trinity less clear in Scripture or in the mind of the Church from the beginning? Or again, if we admit, as is claimed, that the famous text of Job, *Scio quod Redemptor meus vivit*, etc., has no definite meaning as it stands in the Hebrew, and that anyhow the whole argument of the book forbids it to be understood of the resurrection of the body, does not the dogma itself shine forth as brightly as ever in the words of our Lord, in the teachings of S. Paul, in the creeds of all Christian ages? Theologians have clung too long and too closely to many such arguments; and the sooner they are dropped, or referred to only in a secondary way, the better for the present and the future of theology.

Not only does modern criticism thus place sacred doctrine on its true basis, but, in place of the decayed supports which it removes, it substitutes props of enduring strength. For, side by side with the negative, and too often unsparing and destructive, criticism of our contemporaries, there is a positive and constructive form of criticism which has already done valuable service to the cause of Christian and Catholic belief. To it we owe that



broader and truer conception of the sacred writings which will dispose once for all of their so-called discrepancies and inconsistencies. The intimate knowledge of the Egyptian and Assyrian civilizations in the light of which Old Testament history has been so closely scrutinized has only led to the most striking corroboration of its main features and of many of its more minute details.<sup>1</sup> The history of the early Church in the hands of the ablest and most independent critics is doing a similar service to the Catholic faith. Archæology is every day bringing to light fresh proofs of its Apostolic origin. In his excavations of the Roman catacombs, De Rossi has unearthed, as it were, the whole Catholic creed; while strangers to the faith, such as Harnack (*Dogmengeschichte*), Sohm (*Kirchenrecht*), and many others have traced back to the very origin of the Church several of our beliefs, in particular that of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome.

### III.

But while thus strengthening the main lines of the Catholic faith, and occasionally certain secondary truths, modern criticism is, on the other hand, gradually weakening many doctrinal positions long looked upon as entirely safe from assault, and still sustained in some of our theological text-books; whilst others, held only as opinions, are fast disappearing. This result, dreaded by some, welcomed by others, is interesting to all; for, although the movement may be momentarily stayed in its course, it is sure in the end to work itself out, and shape the future.

<sup>1</sup> See Vigouroux, *La Bible et les découvertes modernes*; Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*; Rawlinson, *Historical Illustrations of the O. T.*; Ladd, *What is the Bible*; etc.

In order to understand its effects, we have to consider theology, not in its diminished form, as we find it in modern writers, but in its full expansion, as it stood three hundred years ago.

To those unacquainted with their methods, one of the most surprising things in the theologians of that and the preceding ages is the extraordinary amount of knowledge which they claimed to have upon all sorts of subjects appertaining to, or touching upon, religion. They knew, for instance, everything about the angelic world. Whole folios were filled with accounts of the origin of the celestial spirits, their probation, organization, action, powers, functions, relations between themselves, with mankind, and with all creation. Theologians told the story of creation itself in its principal stages and in all its particulars with a detail such as nobody would venture upon at the present day. They described the state of innocence as if they themselves had lived through it, explaining what Adam knew and what he was ignorant of, how long he lived in paradise, and what sort of existence he would have led if he had never fallen, etc.

And as they knew the beginning, so they knew the end, of the human race. They could tell about Antichrist and his doings, the resurrection with all the detail of its circumstances, the dread judgment, the closing of ages, and the fate of the earth after it had seen the last of man. With the same imperturbable confidence, they looked out on the world of nature and on the world of grace, solving to their satisfaction the endless problems of each. They seemed to know the purposes of God in all His works, and the necessary laws and limitations of His divine action. They saw into heaven, and told of what sort was the life of the glorified saints. They described in terrible detail

the sufferings of the reprobate, located hell, and calculated mathematically its form and dimensions.<sup>1</sup> In short, of the countless questions which arose through ages in the mind of man in regard to God, the world, or himself, there are comparatively few which theologians have not discussed, and attempted to solve, with an assurance beside which that of modern scientists is modesty itself.

This unhesitating confidence was in nowise the fruit of self-conceit; the greatest theologians of the Church were the humblest of men. But they fully believed in three things,—authority, in every degree and of every kind, general principles, and logical deduction; and it was their unlimited trust in these three means of reaching knowledge that led them to affront with touching candor the most arduous problems, and to boldly “rush in where angels fear to tread.”

1. First of all, they accepted without questioning and interpreted literally, unless compelled to do otherwise, every statement they found in THE BIBLE, thus gathering, as they thought, the most reliable information from all its parts on all manner of subjects. To ascertain the true structure of the universe or the laws of divine grace, the utterances of poetry or prophecy were as welcome to them as the most didactic forms of divine teaching. Their conceptions of the formation and order of the visible world were gathered, not only from Genesis, but from every part of the Bible; while their eschatology in all its parts was deduced literally from the visions of the Apocalypse and the prophetic pictures of the Gospel.

2. THE FATHERS in turn came in for a considerable share of their religious trust. They were the lights of the

<sup>1</sup> See Suarez, Joan. a S. Thoma, Salmant., etc., *De creatione, De Angelis, De novissimis*; Lessius, *De perfectionibus et moribus divinis*, etc.

Church, set up by God for the guidance of men; and what had been stated by any of them was looked upon as sufficiently proven. S. Thomas himself builds distinct arguments on their individual sayings. The authority of S. Augustine especially was supreme, and for many centuries it was a standing rule that he at least should not be contradicted: *Cui contradicere fas non est*.

3. Far beneath divine authority as found in the Bible, or as reflected in the Fathers, yet high above individual thought, stood PHILOSOPHY, as taught by Aristotle, and developed by the schools. ARISTOTLE, with his acute analysis, his far-reaching principles, and his logical methods, was like a new revelation to the mediæval mind. One must look into the writings of the period to realize his almost absolute sway over men's thoughts and judgments. Besides the principles of the great philosopher quickly assimilated, and broad enough to bear anything, his habits of generalization were also promptly learned, and led to the elaboration of a new series of convenient axiomatic formulæ, ingenious and plausible, even when not universally true, and seeming to bring within reach whole regions of knowledge hitherto inaccessible, just as the perfected instruments of the present day allow the astronomer to see farther into space, and solve many questions which up to this had remained unanswered.

Thus equipped, the theologian felt himself able to face almost any problem bearing on religion, for it was sure to come under some saying of Scripture or of the Fathers, or under one of those broad principles in whose virtue he so thoroughly believed. All he had to do was to extract the truth which lay hidden in them, and he proceeded to accomplish it by THE PROCESS OF DEDUCTION.

4. For deduction was to the scholastic mind, not only a



method of demonstration, but the principal means of discovery in every sphere of knowledge. True knowledge, it was claimed, always proceeds from principles, and can always be reached through them. Whenever, therefore, positive information was missing, the schoolmen fell back on the general principles of analogy, congruity, fitness, or some other great law which they considered all things subject to, and from thence evolved a reply which nothing came to contradict, and which fully satisfied themselves and their contemporaries.<sup>1</sup>

One can easily imagine what a vast amount of new material, more or less substantial, came in this manner to be evolved, systematized, and finally to be connected with the more ancient and less questionable elements of Christian doctrine, so as to present to the eye a vast and venerable structure of noble proportions and harmonious parts.

Such was mediæval theology, and it is on this fabric that modern criticism came to accomplish its mission, not unlike that of the prophet Jeremiah, "to root up and to pull down — to build and to plant." Of the "building and planting" we have already spoken. The foundation and the main lines of the edifice, criticism, when fair, can touch only to strengthen. And besides their divine element, there are others in the works of our great theologians which are

<sup>1</sup> In the preface of a large work on geography, published in France about two hundred years ago, the question is examined: *Whether islands existed before the Deluge?* The writer, after giving various opinions, finally decides in the affirmative, principally on a reason given by Camdenus, an English geographer, "that islands, like lakes, being part of the beauty of nature, both must have existed when the earth came forth perfect from the hands of its Maker." Mediæval theology is full of such questions and arguments.

scarce less safe from destructive criticism, for they may be reckoned among the noblest productions of the human mind. To say nothing of S. Thomas, such men as Suarez, Lugo, Vasquez, Ripalda, have seen, almost as far as the human intelligence can reach, into the depths of the divine nature and the mysteries of the faith; and their treatment of them, from the standpoint of the scholastic philosophy, is so searching and so thorough as scarce ever to be surpassed.

But mingled with them are the weaker elements, to which we have referred, and it is on these that the disintegrating effect of criticism is principally felt.

#### IV.

The process may be said to have begun with the advent of what is called positive, in contradistinction to scholastic theology. It developed slowly, because of the conservative spirit of the schools, and of the reverence in which the sacred science was held in all its parts. Yet in every subject upon which the growing knowledge of Christian antiquity was brought to bear the change was noticeable, and left its trace even in the text-books which succeeded each other in the schools. It is more deeply felt in our generation, not because of the introduction of any new criterion of theological truth, but because those generally recognized already have been made more effective, and are applied with more sincerity and thoroughness.

1. First of all, Scriptural arguments rest on literal interpretation; yet it becomes more and more difficult, as we advance in the intelligence of the Bible, to say just when and where its statements should be taken literally. Be-

sides the looseness or lack of grammatical accuracy, which is common to all languages, it is felt that the productions of each country and of each period have to be interpreted in accordance with the literary habits of the time and of the people. At all times and everywhere poetry and prophecy have had a freer scope, and were less tied down to the more exact vocabulary of philosophy or narrative. History itself, with some races, shared the privilege, besides being freely imitated by allegory and fiction. Hence a cloud has arisen which overshadows many things in Scripture, which in former times suggested no difficulty. Very few, for instance, consider any longer the first chapter of Genesis as strictly historical, and the freedom permitted in regard to it is gradually being extended to the following chapters and to other parts of the Bible. As for the prophetic description of the resurrection and the last judgment, referred to above, it is equivalently admitted that they present only a poetic picture, from which no solid fact can be extracted with certainty, beyond the reality and the solemn character of these great events.

2. The Fathers have come to be better understood in this age than in any other; but the closer and more critical study to which they have been subjected during the last two centuries has long since put an end to the indiscriminate trust given them in older times. They still remain the unhesitating, unquestioned witnesses of the Church's faith in many particulars; but in how many more do they simply give expression to their personal views, or follow the prevailing notions of their time, or work out conclusions from Scripture by canons of interpretation which nobody thinks of following to-day? S. Augustine, to take the most notable example, with his extraordinarily

active and fertile genius, alive to the manifold aspects of things, ever originating new problems and stimulated by incessant questioning from all parts of the Church,—S. Augustine reflects, divines, draws inferences from the Bible, from the familiar data of faith, from his personal experience of soul and of life, and sets them forth now confidently, now in a modest, tentative way. But his hesitations are soon forgotten, and his words remain, recommended by the great authority of the man, by the attractiveness of his views, by the fact that nothing more satisfactory suggests itself for the time in answer to the questions he undertakes to solve. And so they are reverently and joyfully gathered up, repeated, transmitted, and at length become a sort of tradition from which men feel no longer entirely free to depart.

It is by such individual opinions of one or other of the Fathers that the modern critic finds many doctrines to have been originated. No wonder if he hesitates to place the same reliance on them as those who took them through preceding ages for the venerable voice of Catholic tradition itself.

3. Finally, misgivings of a similar kind have developed in the modern mind in regard to those deductive elements of theology evolved from the principles of reason or of faith, by the elaborate logical process in which the mediæval mind so delighted. All experience seems now to lead to the conclusion that, outside the sphere of pure abstraction (mathematics, metaphysics, logic), the *a priori* method is never entirely reliable, and can do solid service only on condition of its results being verified by direct observation. Hence the general disregard among our contemporaries for abstract argument. Especially in the sciences based on facts, no conclusion is considered certain



until it has been verified, and what cannot approve itself in this way must remain a mere conjecture.<sup>1</sup>

The critical student of theology finds the rule equally applicable in his own sphere. He sees, for example, that the argument of S. Cyprian, that the gift of faith could be imparted in baptism only by those who possessed it themselves, was very plausible, but the general practice of the Church was against it. He sees that when S. Thomas argued against the validity of a deprecatory form of absolution because absolution was a judicial sentence, and not a prayer, it was hard to answer him until it came to be known that Greeks and Latins alike had used that form for centuries. If we knew nothing of the Bible beyond the fact of its being divinely inspired, and having God for

<sup>1</sup> It is true the reaction against the indiscriminate use of *a priori* methods in former days has been carried entirely too far, and the censors need in their turn to be corrected. It is one of the objects of Catholic philosophy to lead back to a rational belief in metaphysics. But a lesson has been given which should be remembered. Metaphysical argument has little to do with facts, and even in the sphere of speculation, abstract principles require very delicate handling. Entirely true in one sphere of thought, they may be imperfectly so, or be positively inapplicable, in another. Yet their simplicity, their perspicuity, the happy manner in which they light up and bring together so many objects of thought, easily win for them unqualified assent. Or, again, the formula which embodies them may be imperfect, generally but not universally true, yet so plausible that only the fact of its leading to inadmissible conclusions reveals its defect. How many even then will manage to escape such conclusions in some illogical way, or actually accept them, sooner than forsake or qualify their so-called principles! Hence the axiom of warning familiar to the schoolmen themselves: *Dolus latet in generalibus*. The caution applies to creeds, definitions of faith, and dogmatic declarations, as well as to philosophical formulas. For, as we have already remarked, in many cases they are only an approximative expression of truths beyond the range of human intelligence; and, even when the object is accessible, the expression may not be perfectly adapted to it, or be made to cover, by logical deduction, much more than was ever intended by its authors.

its author, we should be led directly to conclude its verbal inspiration, its grammatical accuracy, its perspicuity, the perfection of its language, and many more qualities, all contradicted by the simple inspection of the book. It is the book itself, reverently yet critically examined, not *a priori* argument, that will best tell us with what measure of perfection or imperfection God has vouchsafed to use the medium of writing to convey to mankind His truth and His will.

Such, in brief, are the principles by which Catholic theology is being renovated. When judiciously applied, they lead but to a more accurate and more thorough knowledge of divine truth, and disturb only what needs to be reconsidered. If abused, they may lead to all manner of evil consequences; but the responsibility rests with those who abuse them. The principles themselves lose nothing of their usefulness nor of their truth.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### *HOW TO STUDY IT.*

Two consequences follow from what has been said hitherto: first, that theology is not a subject to be studied once for all, but something to be kept habitually before the mind through life, and returned to faithfully as often as, under the pressure of other duties, it has been temporarily forsaken; secondly, that as much as possible this study should not only lead backward to what has begun to fade from the memory, but onward too, in the various directions opened up to it by research, ancient and modern.

It now remains to inquire in what manner this purpose may be best carried out; and, as the "life-study" of theology is in a great measure dependent upon the way in which its foundations are originally laid, it becomes necessary to include in our remarks its earliest as well as its subsequent stages.

We shall therefore consider in the present article, first, the elementary study of theology, and in the second place, its later developments.

### I.

Elementary theology is commonly learned under a master, nor can it be learned otherwise, even by men of superior mind and culture, without much difficulty and many mistakes. Practically, therefore, the question of method rests with the teacher. To him it belongs to determine the rules by which the work shall proceed. In laying them down, however, his freedom is limited in many ways. For, however much he might enjoy following the bent of his genius, his teaching must be in a great measure independent of it, and run, like all elementary teaching, on settled lines.

These in turn are already determined by the text-book. For we suppose that something of that kind is placed in the hands of the students. It may be a manual of theology, or a developed programme prepared by the professor, and expanded still further by his oral teaching; but, without some sort of text embodying what is essential in the notions, doctrines, and proofs of theology, beginners can be expected to catch or to retain very little that is definite or accurate. Furthermore, it should be the object of the teacher to discover and to point out, in whatever text has been chosen, the expression or the suggestion of

all he proposes to impart, or at least to gather round it and connect with it whatever else he may deem it advisable to add, fully persuaded that whatever is neither found in nor recalled by the familiar text is sure to be soon forgotten by the majority of his hearers.

Neither can the time-honored use of definitions, divisions, formal statements of doctrine, proofs, etc., be neglected. All experience goes to show that, while they may be occasionally simplified, and relieved of unnecessary details, these so-called scholastic forms are simply indispensable, and that no thorough, abiding results can be reached without them.

The same may be said of the scholastic vocabulary. It may not be perfect. It may be built on a philosophy which has long ceased to be popular, and contain many conceptions and classifications which recommend themselves no more even to theologians. But it is in possession. It is the technical language of the science, and, as such, independent of individual preferences. It is, moreover, the key to all that has been written on theology for centuries, and without it the past would be a sealed book to the student. Many new forms of expression, it is true, are being gradually substituted for the older ones; the exuberance of distinction and terminology of mediæval science has been considerably pruned, and will doubtless undergo further retrenchments; but that comes by a sort of unconscious process in which the elementary teacher is expected to take only a very moderate share.

The rule applies finally and with still more force to the doctrines themselves. Theology is instinctively conservative, as we have seen; elementary theology has to be doubly so. Its function is not to originate new conceptions and speculations, but to initiate the student into the



ascertained truths and current teachings of the science. Even when an occasional departure from the latter has become necessary, it can be properly understood only through a previous knowledge of the traditional positions. To follow up that growth and transformation described on a former occasion belongs to the higher sphere of theological study ; in its elementary stage it merely gathers in results when they have been definitely reached, and places them side by side with the more ancient doctrines, thus securing the solid benefits of progress without the disadvantages at the cost of which they have been won.

## II.

Theology is composed of elements similar to those of the other sciences : notions, facts, doctrines, proofs, deductions, and the like. In the vast accumulation of all these, the fruit of many ages, it is the obvious duty of the teacher to single out what is most necessary to know, and is of most practical use in the work of the ministry.

1. *The doctrines*, first of all ; a conception, clear, accurate, and as full as possible of the teaching of the Church, or of the schools, on each subject. This is easy enough, so long as there is question only of facts or of truths accessible to reason. The difficulty comes with the mysteries. Yet even mysteries have their intelligible side. The facts which sometimes embody them, and through which they are revealed to us, may be, on the surface, as conceivable as any others. The terms in which they are formulated by the Church may be perfectly clear, the mystery lying in the nexus which unites them. A distinct conception should always be given to the student of what the mystery consists in, and where it begins. Sometimes one sees that

the very terms are only analogical and approximative ; and that, in their inability to give an adequate expression of the divine truth, theologians, nay, the Church herself, is wont to fall back on the very terms of Sacred Writ through which it was originally intimated, or to use those through which it has been handed down by Tradition. Students often fail to understand why such importance is attached in the schools to these established forms and special terms in expressing the mysteries of the faith, and in the statement of doctrines generally. Yet it is obvious that a message imperfectly understood is never so safely transmitted as in the very terms in which it was originally delivered. Even when it is question of more accessible truths, or of logical developments, the forms which they assume in theology is often the result of a slow elaboration of Christian thought in many great minds, and therefore not to be altered lightly. But their full meaning should be distinctly brought out—not merely by the definitions of the schools which, in their effort at perfect accuracy and completeness, not unfrequently lose themselves afresh in obscurity—but by the familiar terms of daily life, and by illustrations which lead back the mind from abstractions intelligible only to a few, to concrete notions accessible to all.

At the same time that the true mind of the Church is thus made clear, it is most important to show how far her teaching extends in each case, and where it stops ; as, for instance, when she declares that in the Eucharist Christ is “really, truly, and substantially present,” but leaves us to determine how His humanity can exist under such appearances and in so many places at the same time ; or when she tells us that certain sacraments imprint an indelible character on the soul, but has nothing to say of the exact

nature, purposes, or effects of that mysterious impress. What the Church fails to determine, theology attempts to supply by the usual methods of analogy, deduction, and the like; sometimes unsatisfactorily; often ingeniously and plausibly enough to win common assent.

The conjectures of theologians, when based upon certain special conceptions of principle or fact, are called Systems.

2. *Systems* play a considerable part in theology. They are the attempts of human reason to account for what religion teaches, but leaves unexplained. Through them many obscure aspects of the sacred science are lighted up, many of its difficulties removed. They serve, moreover, to coördinate and bind together its various parts, besides offering to the philosophical mind a most delightful and strengthening exercise. But in an elementary study their place is secondary, and has to be closely limited.

3. *Proofs*. A clear conception being thus formed of each doctrine, the next thing is to show the grounds upon which it rests.

Proof is an essential part of all scientific treatment. It constitutes, in fact, one of the principal differences between theology and the catechism. It enlightens and fortifies the convictions of the student, and fits him for his prospective duties of exponent and defender of the Christian doctrine. Hence the important place it occupies in theological text-books. Under each principal doctrine is found a considerable array of authorities and reasons, generally in the same order, the order of dignity rather than of cogency. In the presentation of them there is much to exercise the judgment and tact of the teacher.

He should, first of all, bring out clearly and distinctly before the minds of his hearers the principal grounds upon which the doctrine rests. Generally speaking, they consist

in the decisions of the Church, or the current teaching of theologians, both easily ascertained and devoid of ambiguity, but to be very clearly apprehended, because they are the basis upon which Catholics ultimately rest their belief, and beyond which few of them care to look. Yet beyond are the sources from which the teachings of theology and of the Church herself flow, and the student cannot be left in ignorance of them. The form and extent of the developments to give them must depend principally on their intrinsic worth and on their future usefulness. Much valuable time may be wasted in striving to extract proofs from obscure texts of Scripture or of the Fathers, or in discussing problems and difficulties much talked of perhaps in former days, but forgotten by the present generation.

The highest importance attaches naturally to the value of the proofs. Judged by modern standards, many fall away considerably from the position which they held in the past, or can retain it only on condition of being deeply modified.

The scriptural argument, for instance, in the controversies which followed the Protestant reformation, was mostly conventional; based on the principles or admissions of the opponents, often conclusive so far as they were concerned, but insufficient, in many cases, to found an independent conviction. In addition to this, serious doubts have been raised by critical study on the authenticity or true reading of many important texts never before questioned; and so much freedom, not to say looseness, of expression and metaphor of all kinds, is felt to prevail in the language of the Bible, that it is almost impossible to build anything entirely solid on a single passage, even when unquestionably authentic. We speak, of course, of doctrines, not of facts. How-



ever clear a passage may be, to-day we instinctively look around for other passages which may strengthen it, or we listen to catch the manner in which Tradition has reëchoed it through Christian ages. The true Scriptural argument is cumulative, and brings full conviction only when the same truth is borne to us in concordant tones from several places and in various connections. Such, for instance, is the case with regard to the divinity of our Lord, or the redemption of mankind by His passion and death, or, again, His real presence in the Eucharist. More might be added; and doubtless a close, intelligent study of the Bible may enable and has enabled religious minds, even outside the Church, to reach definite, unhesitating convictions in regard to many divine truths. Yet, as a rule, the scriptural proof falls far short of demonstration, and in many cases contains a mere intimation of doctrines which may be gathered with assurance only from the living tradition or from the formal teaching of the Church.

Hence, three principles to be kept steadily before the mind of the student, and to be acted upon by the professor himself: —

*First.* That the Biblical proof of doctrines must be taken in each case just for what it is worth, — sometimes as a complete demonstration, sometimes as a simple suggestion; in most cases as an argument varying indefinitely in value between the two.

*Second.* That the practice of building broad doctrines on single texts of the Bible, or of resting everything on their strict, grammatical sense, as might be done with some reason in dealing with a definition of pope or council, instead of seeking for their true meaning in the context, the intellectual surroundings, or the general laws of the literature to which they belong; or, again, of inter-

preting passages strictly when favorable, and loosely when they make a difficulty,—that such practices are only calculated to produce artificial convictions and wrong habits of mind; that they cultivate ingenuity at the cost of sincerity, and teach to quibble instead of striving to get at the truth. They came originally of an undue extension of the deductive methods of scholasticism; but their growth is principally due to the controversial methods of Protestants, in which their Catholic opponents followed them, with more generosity, perhaps, than wisdom. They still linger in theological text-books, but even from there they are happily disappearing.

*Third.* That for whatever purpose passages of Scripture are brought forward,—suggestion, illustration, or proof,—their true meaning should be always pointed out. The time commonly spent by students in committing them to memory would, perhaps, be better employed in taking cognizance of them in their context, and discovering in it, as far as possible, their veritable interpretation. A practice of the kind always gives a better hold of the text, and permits to use it to more advantage in exposition as well as in proof, besides leading to a more thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

The same remarks apply with still greater force to the passages of the Fathers, used as proofs in theological text-books. That a solid demonstration of doctrine may be gathered from the Fathers is indubitable—if only the citations are authentic, and relevant, and sufficiently numerous, and sufficiently representative, and sufficiently affirmative. But to ascertain all this is clearly beyond the reach of a student. He has to take it on trust. Trust in this case means that his teacher has ascertained by himself the mind of the Fathers, and that he deliberately holds

them as committed—in whatever measure he may state—to the doctrine in question. The student's mind is not placed in any real contact with the proof; he has only his teacher's word, or the assurance of his text-book, (both, it must be confessed, often too lightly given) that such a proof exists.

Yet these short extracts, though generally insufficient to constitute an argument, may serve as representative of a fuller testimony. Even of themselves they always carry a certain weight of authority; they often formulate or illustrate happily the truth in question, and, at the very least, they serve to show that it was not unknown to Christian antiquity. Whatever purpose they may be expected to serve, care should be taken to ascertain their true meaning, and to appeal only to what is authentic. Spurious quotations of the Fathers abound in many of our older, and, what is less pardonable, in some of our more recent theological works.

It would be easy to pursue these remarks in connection with the other kinds of proof in use among theologians, but this would carry us beyond our limits. The whole subject of theological criteria is one of singular importance. Since the great book of Melchior Cano, under various titles (*De locis theologicis*—*De fontibus Revelationis*, etc.), it has grown into a distinct branch of theological science; and as might be expected, in a time when all doctrines are more or less on their trial, its canons are studied to-day with special eagerness. The student has to be made acquainted with them from the beginning in a general way. But, as in all arts, the difficulty is not in learning the rules; it is in applying them judiciously. It is here that the superior knowledge, the experience, and the

tact of a teacher are chiefly necessary. Only under his guidance can a student learn to weigh and measure proofs with any accuracy, to ascertain the true meaning of alleged testimonies, to compare evidences, to decide how much or how little value attaches to certain positions and statements of Fathers or theologians; what is significant in their agreement, what is accidental or devoid of special meaning; when they are the channels of primitive, divine truth, and when, as may be, they only hand down undetected mistakes. All this is taught by the professor by availing himself intelligently of the more striking instances as they come up, the result being that at the end of his course the student will have learned, almost without knowing it, how to take in hand and to apply, sagaciously and judiciously, the most approved and perfected methods of theological criticism, and at the same time will have laid the foundations of the further work which still awaits him.

### III.

For, once more, the study of theology having to be continued through life in one shape or another, its early lines require to be laid in view of that future development.

An obvious truth, yet not unfrequently forgotten. A manner of teaching the sacred science is occasionally met with which dries up all its natural sources of interest, and leaves the impression that within a narrow compass all there is to know of it has been comprised and disposed of. Can we wonder if such an impression, too readily caught up, leads directly and promptly, once the curriculum gone over, to the total abandonment of the study? The truth, we believe, is that if the great majority of students, or at



least the more intelligent among them, go forth without a craving to know more of the great science, and a resolve to strive for it, the fault must lie with the teacher. He has not gone deep enough himself to strike the living waters, or he has unwisely sealed them up. He has built, not the beginning of a noble structure, available at once, yet indicative in all its lines of future growth, but a small, narrow edifice to which nothing may be added. He has led his followers, not along the hills from which endless prospects may be discovered, but through a deep and dreary pass, to escape from which was a relief and joy.

It is elementary theology then that must beget the anticipation of what is to follow, the longing for what is beyond. In the previous article we briefly indicated some of the lines on which this future development should be pursued. It is clear, first of all, that, instead of the old objections and errors upon which so much time is still wasted in some schools, but which are never heard of outside their walls, the questions and difficulties of the day have principally to be considered.<sup>1</sup>

Each generation brings with it a fresh supply, but it brings also improved means and methods of solving them, and of broadening at the same time the field of religious knowledge. It is only what is happening in all the sciences. Astronomy, for example, forty years ago was supposed to have almost completed its work of discovery. Yet since then spectroscopy, photography, and larger lenses have indefinitely enlarged the field of observation,

<sup>1</sup> Let us not be considered as making light of the knowledge of past controversies and defunct errors. It is in connection with them that Catholic doctrine has been evolved in many instances, and that it owes much of its actual form. But they are now only a matter of history, and it is in the history of doctrine that they find their proper place.

prompted more eager inquiry, and led to the most unexpected results.

In the same way new methods and new discoveries are stirring up the peaceful regions of theology, awakening the interest of some, disturbing the quietude of others, summoning imperatively all to look and to listen. The theologian cannot leave them unheeded. He cannot, for instance, neglect the issues raised by Biblical scholars, neither can he settle them by *a priori* principles. He cannot withdraw himself from the toils and strife of war by shutting himself up in conclusions reached centuries ago, as in an impregnable fortress, and by declaring that he will not move from them. That might make him safe personally, but it would allow the enemy to hold the field, and the world to move on without the Church to guide it.

The historical side of theology opens up fields vaster still and more inviting. History it is that more than aught else makes theology into a thing of life. In fact, it is doubtful whether without it there can be such a thing as a full intelligence of any theological question. To understand a doctrinal position thoroughly, we have to go back to its first beginnings and faintest intimations in the Old and New Testaments; then to follow it down through the channels of Christian thought; to notice, as the case may be, its fluctuations or its ever growing strength; the oppositions it may have awakened and conquered; its logical developments; how acted upon by the conceptions, opinions, and beliefs of those among whom it had its principal growth; how purified and separated by discussion from what had unduly clung to it; how, if a divine truth, it gradually became manifest to all, and was gathered finally, like a ripe fruit, by the hand of the Church.

To ascertain thus the historical development of the Christian doctrine not only gives a grasp of its full sense and bearings, such as no other method can give, but it shows far better than any other form of exposition the grounds upon which it rests. The primacy of the Roman See, for example, or the papal infallibility, or the theology of any of the sacraments, may doubtless be established satisfactorily by the usual authorities. But if, instead of a dry and dreary succession of testimonies, we would see the living mind of the Church in each one of these doctrines, and appreciate their just value, we have to go back and watch them as they arise in the pages of Scripture, or in the writings of the Fathers who teach or defend them, or in the action of the Church by which she implies or openly proclaims them. Thus only can we have their full meaning; and thus learned, they are never forgotten.

Such developments belong naturally to the later stage of theological study. They cannot be thought of in an elementary course, except occasionally, as an example of the method. But a rapid historical outline would seem possible and desirable as an introduction to every important thesis of Dogmatic Theology.

Comparatively few, doubtless, even where the taste is not wanting, will find the requisite time and a sufficient supply of books to pursue such lines of research to any extent. But there is another task more attractive, more useful, and, in some measure, accessible to all; depending not so much on books and special reading, as on general culture, observation, and reflection. It consists in evolving what we may call the philosophy of dogma.

The philosophy of dogma comprises many things.

Its scope, first of all, is to determine, as far as possible, what underlies the doctrinal forms in which the Christian

religion comes to us. For divine truth, as we find it in the Church and in the schools, wears a garb of human texture which partly shows and partly hides the reality. It comes to us through the Bible, enveloped in every variety of Oriental metaphor. We find it in the Fathers, robed in the folds of Greek philosophy. In the mediæval schools it reappears in the full armor of Aristotelian dialectics. But nothing of all these is part of its essence. They are only the changing accidents which reveal the hidden substance. To reach the substance itself; to contemplate as nearly as possible the reality divested of all metaphor, disengaged from all that is only system; to forget the anthropomorphic images in which men are wont to clothe God and all things divine; to contemplate the mysteries of the faith freed from the terminology, often confusing, as it is often helpful, of the schools,— this is the result of a deep, thoughtful consideration of Christian doctrine.

Extremely interesting in itself for a philosophical and religious mind, this process of abstraction is chiefly important in that it prepares the way for new presentations of Christian truth more in harmony with the present condition of human thought.

The mind of man, ever fundamentally the same, yet is ever changing. New views, new principles, new habits of thought and processes of reasoning, substitute themselves gradually to those previously in possession. As a consequence, what recommends itself strongly to men's minds at one period may fail to affect them in another; and yet only what is in harmony with the mental data of each one can be truly assimilated. Now, it must be confessed that the modern mind is in many ways unlike that of ancient or mediæval times. Many current principles of former days



have ceased to be believed in. The terminology of the schools has in a great measure disappeared from common use, and with it a number of subtile conceptions have become unfamiliar and even unintelligible. The prodigious extension of our knowledge of the universe has deeply modified certain standards by which former generations were wont to judge things. Neither do we share their trust in abstract principles, unless they be of the most definite and obvious kind. Still less do we rely on the unverified deductions which they spun out indefinitely from them. Only those whose mental training is deductive and scholastic can sit down in our times, and draw endless conclusions from abstract premises with the serene confidence of the mathematician working out the solution of a problem of which all the data lie before him. In presence of such results the modern man will say, "All that may be ; but I cannot be sure of it so long as I have not tested its truth." Verification, in fact, of some kind is looked for in everything, facts, testimonies, experiences — something to reassure the mind grown distrustful of itself. Hence the ever-increasing importance of the historical and psychological methods in the presentation of dogmatic truth. In both the mind is kept in constant touch with facts. It proceeds from them, and is ever coming back to them. The facts of history and the facts of the soul give to religious doctrines and speculations a reality which abstract argument has no longer the power to impart.

This has been fully understood by the most successful modern exponents of Catholic doctrine. It is by translating afresh the unchanging doctrine of the Church into the language and thoughts of their contemporaries that such men as Lacordaire, Ozanam, Nicolas, Bougaud, Monsabré in France, Newman and his disciples in England, the ablest

apologists of Germany and elsewhere, have won back countless numbers to the faith, or reawakened their fervor. Each generation, each country, each city and village almost, needs a version of its own. Christianity has, unhappily, lost its empire over the most active and cultivated minds of our age. Yet in one shape or another they are ever brought back to it, and crave for a faith that may adapt itself to the form in which their minds have been shaped, and fill the void of their souls. What they look for is not so much positive proofs as reason; that is, a harmonizing of what is taught them in the name of God with their mental system, such as it has been made by the study of history, philosophy, science, and the experience of life.

To supply this need, which is far from being confined to the intellectual *élite*, but is more or less felt in every sphere of modern life, becomes the paramount duty of the priest of to-day. But only a mind of the highest order could accomplish the work fully, for it would imply almost universal knowledge.

S. Thomas represents such a character of intellect. He knew all that was known in the age in which he lived, not only of the Bible, of the Fathers, and of the Canons of the Church, but also of history, of philosophy, of science; and in each department of knowledge he discovered intimations, analogies, laws, principles, by which to light up the dark places of divine revelation, and accommodate it to the prevailing condition of men's minds. Were he to return among us to-day, momentarily shorn of the beatific vision, and possessing only his original gifts, we should find him once more eager to take in all knowledge, busy with the most recent discoveries, alive to the great questions of the hour, watching the developments of minds

and of events, gathering light from everything, and harmoniously blending it with the light from above.

And this is just the duty which devolves, in our age, on the representatives of divine truth, from the learned theologian, lost in his books, to the pastor and the newly made priest, busy with the works of charity and the care of souls. To add to the knowledge that comes directly from God that other knowledge of which the world is so proud, and turn it to higher ends; to discern the signs of the times, and to catch under the surface of daily life the undercurrents, often deep and powerful, which lead men on unconsciously, they know not where; to note and take possession of the common ground upon which reason, experience, and Christianity meet; to keep in touch, in a word, with one's time; to believe that divine truth is made for every age and every degree of culture, and that the main question is to recognize the aspects of it which fit in best with the intellectual, moral, and social needs of the people and of the time each one has to deal with. This, we say, is possible in some measure to all; and in that measure is a duty for all, for in it lies the highest usefulness, as well as the deepest interest, of Dogmatic Theology.

## CHAPTER V.

*MORAL THEOLOGY.*

AT all times divine Revelation contained two kinds of elements: truths to be accepted and believed in as coming from God; precepts to be submitted to as the expression of His will.

These divine commands, recalling, emphasizing the natural law, or adding to and completing it in view of the higher condition to which man has been raised, and of the means vouchsafed to him to reach his ultimate end, constitute, when organized and set in logical consecutive shape, the science of Christian ethics, or, as it is commonly called in the schools, Moral Theology.

Moral Theology thus understood comprises and combines the natural and the divine law. It includes, at least in principle, the laws of the Church and the precepts of rightful authority binding on the conscience: in a word, it covers the whole field of moral and religious duty.

## ARTICLE I.

*IMPORTANCE OF MORAL THEOLOGY.*

## I.

The science of duty is the most desirable, because the most necessary, form of knowledge. A man may be ignorant of almost anything except of his duty. To submit to



it constitutes his chief excellence ; to disregard it, even though he were endowed with other gifts of the highest order, debases him and makes him contemptible. This was understood even in the pagan world, and caused the law of duty to be so eagerly sought after from the earliest times. The imperative necessities of life once provided for, the great concern of man was to learn the true rule of conduct. God had indeed revealed it from the beginning. But it was soon lost, with so much more of primitive truth, or but imperfectly preserved in the altered traditions of an earlier period. The main purpose of ancient philosophy was to rediscover it, and give it back to mankind. A large share, indeed, is given to speculative truth by the great thinkers of Greece, but the moral problems are their principal concern. They emerge in every page of the writings of Plato, and Aristotle devotes to them his most valued treatises. Even in the Greek tragic poets, there runs, from beginning to end, a distinct vein of ethical teaching. With the Romans the tendency is still more pronounced. Stoicism, which flourished chiefly among them, is almost exclusively engaged in inquiring into the guiding principles of conduct, and in applying them to the particulars of life. The problem, it is true, was not for the ancients to determine what we would call the law of duty, but rather to find what they named "the chief good," and the mode of conduct which could best secure it. Yet, consciously or unconsciously, in most of them the ethical principle asserted its supremacy. In moral excellence they saw the highest, the noblest, the most desirable form of human perfection ; and while ostensibly pursuing the greatest happiness, they were ever led back by their speculations to the cultivation of virtue.

## II.

The preponderance thus given to moral truth by the ancient philosophers is a still more noticeable characteristic, as might be expected, of the Bible.

In that wonderful collection of inspired writings which compose the Old Testament, the foremost subject is, all through, man's duty to God and to his fellow-men, — the principle, the law, and the end of human action. "Thy word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths."<sup>1</sup> History, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, all are, in their way, a revelation of God and of divine truth, but still more directly and more forcibly are they a manifestation of His will, a gradual unfolding of the moral life, from its primary elements to its perfection, in a word, a complete system of spiritual discipline and goodness.

The remark applies with still more truth to the writings of the New Testament. The facts and teachings of the Gospel are, no doubt, a new and beautiful manifestation of the divine nature, and of God's love for man. But its direct object is not, evidently, to enlarge our acquaintance with the unknown truths of a higher world. Christ, in His teachings, appeals constantly to the current beliefs of His hearers, but adds little to their speculative knowledge ; and what we learn of the unknown through the Gospel has mostly to be gathered from statements and remarks seemingly made for other purposes. What comes out clearly, directly, and distinctly is the moral lesson, — the necessity of spiritual renovation, — the new life of purity, detachment, and love. All that prepares the soul for that higher life or helps to expand it in the hearts of men, faith, humility, self-denial, prayer ; all that turns them from

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii.

earth to heaven, brings them nearer to God, and makes them more like unto Himself,—this is what Christ proclaims, inculcates, repeats in every form of language; this, with the underlying speculative truths which it implies, is truly the burden of the Gospel, the supreme message of God to man.

Nor is it otherwise in the other inspired writings of the New Testament. The Epistles of S. Peter, S. James, and S. John are almost entirely practical; and, although the Epistles of S. Paul have been studied principally in view of speculative doctrines, and with abundant fruit, yet, with S. Paul, as in the Gospel, speculative truth is only a starting-point and a means. The end is ever practical—the new life in Christ, the fashioning of the whole natural man on the divine model. To this all leads up, even what is most speculative, in the writings of the Apostle.

### III.

If, then, the divine message has had for its principal object at all times the moral guidance of man; if Christ himself, as a teacher, came to tell the world not so much what to think and to believe as what to do and to be,—is it not natural to expect that the science which undertakes to propound His teachings shall deal largely with human action in the endless variety of its moral bearings; in other words, that Moral Theology shall occupy a prominent position in Christian minds, and shall at all times be actively cultivated in the Catholic Church?

The facts are in keeping with such an anticipation. Our Lord himself, in the solemn mission given to His Apostles, seems to be principally concerned about the propagation of His practical teachings. “*Going therefore, He says, teach*

*ye all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."* Dogma is the foundation, to be laid solidly and maintained in its unyielding strength; but the practical Christian life is the beautiful structure which it is its privilege to sustain. To the latter, as a consequence, the Church has given her principal care. Dogmatic truth, indeed, she has always maintained and imparted; and in nothing has she put forth more energy than in defending it in the hour of peril. But, the danger once conquered, she invariably returned to the terms of her original mission; and the duties and spirit of the Christian life became once more the habitual object of her thoughts and of her teaching.

This is clearly exemplified in the writings of the Fathers. Dogmatic in their catechetical instructions, or whenever the controversies of the day or the condition of minds made it necessary, their delight was to dwell on the moral and spiritual idea of divine truth. The very earliest among them, Clement, Hermas, Barnabas, Ignatius, etc., treat of little else; whilst those of the following period, such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, though busy in the defense of the Christian faith, devote whole treatises to moral subjects. Even in the great classic age of Christian eloquence and learning, — the fourth and fifth centuries, — although much space is given to the fundamental dogmatic questions agitated at that time, yet much is also devoted to the principles and rules of the Christian life. In the height of their controversies, such men as S. Ambrose, S. Basil, and S. Augustine find time to write some of their most valuable treatises on moral and spiritual subjects. Their homilies are almost entirely of a practical kind; and, in the various parts of the Bible which they explain to the people, even in the historical



books, little is singled out and dwelt upon except for purposes of practical guidance and edification. Later on, with the subsidence of dogmatic error, the exclusive tendency to moral instruction became more pronounced. Even the greatest minds, such as S. John Chrysostom in the East, and S. Gregory in the West, are almost entirely taken up with the moral side of Christianity; and little besides it is to be met in the Fathers of the following ages.

#### IV.

The work of the schoolmen was, on the contrary, mainly dogmatic. That combination of candor, reverence, and intellectual power so remarkable in the great minds of the Middle Ages, found its most congenial object in the mysteries of the faith and in the deep questions which gathered around them. The philosophy of Aristotle, universally adopted, was especially fitted for the investigation of such subjects, and, in response to the eager questionings of a world awakened to active thought, it gave back answers which satisfied and delighted. To minds thus disposed, the sphere of duty seemed comparatively limited and familiar; that of speculative doctrine spread itself out boundless and almost unexplored. As a consequence, dogmatic studies assumed in the schools a preponderant position which, it may be said, they have never since then ceased to hold. For, while many of the circumstances which gave importance to them originally have disappeared, others have arisen in their stead. The controversies, for example, of the three last centuries have helped much to enlarge, rejuvenate, and transform speculative theology; and, by its very nature and its leading aspects, it will always call for deep thought and elaborate research.

Yet at no time has Moral Theology been neglected in the schools. As a part of Christian doctrine, it occupied a prominent position in the works of the earliest theologians, such as Hildebertus and Hugh of S. Victor, and later on in the *Sentences* of Lombardus, and in the *Summa* of S. Thomas, a fact of much consequence in the present connection, for, up to a recent period, the bulk of theological writings came forth in the shape of commentaries upon one or the other, and naturally dealt with the same manner of questions. It was a common practice, besides, to write special treatises on the principal virtues, the vices, the commandments, etc. Later on, the whole scheme of Christian morality came to be put together in methodical shape, and studied as a distinct science, chiefly for the practical uses of the ministry. It was by the study of such books, much more than by the speculations and subtleties of dogma, that the great majority of priests were prepared for the care of souls. The *élite* of the universities rejoiced in the latter, but to the former the rank and file of the clergy invariably turned.

## V.

The same division prevails substantially in our own times. Our seminaries being meant for men of very unequal mental calibre, a mean is aimed at which may meet the strict requirements of all. Dogmatic and Moral Theology occupy about the same time, and are taught with equal care. The importance of each is felt all around, but the preferences of the majority go in the direction of Moral Theology.

The reasons are obvious.

Not only is Moral Theology more accessible to the average mind, but it seems to prepare more directly and more

effectively for the work of the ministry. A missionary priest needs, more than aught else, to possess a thorough knowledge of the Christian rule of life. His people have, of course, to be taught what to believe, but they have to be taught more elaborately and in detail what to practice. The doubts and difficulties which they bring to him are almost all of a practical kind. Their doctrinal misconceptions are usually of little account compared with a mistaken apprehension of their duties. A full and accurate knowledge of the latter is essential to the priest, whether he guides in the child the awakening sense of right and wrong, or teaches from the pulpit the general duties of the Christian and those of each state of life, or sits in judgment on the repentant sinner. Wherever he speaks he is answerable to God for the manner in which he interprets and enforces his commands, to the Church for the maintenance of her discipline; above all he is responsible to the individual souls placed under his care for the wisdom and truth of the principles and methods by which he guides them. Their progress in virtue, their eternal salvation, may depend — must always depend in some measure — on the amount of accurate, practical knowledge which he brings to his work.

No wonder then if, during the course of his studies, he is particularly anxious to gather in all that can be got of general principles, of particular rules, of the helpful experience of others, to assist him in his prospective labors. No wonder if, when the final ordination is near at hand, he strives to recall, to freshen, to give unity and vitality to the knowledge thus slowly accumulated, so that he may not be entirely unprepared for the solemn duties of his office.

Experience soon proves to him the wisdom of such a course. Once a priest and engaged in his work, difficul-

ties and responsibilities quickly gather around him, and, unless he be entirely blind, impress him painfully with the sense of his inexperience, of his immaturity, of his general inadequacy. The result is to make him hasten back to his teachers and to his books, and drink in more deeply that many-sided knowledge of which he went forth with too scanty a supply.

If he be truly wise, he will keep on doing so to the end. Moral Theology is indeed the one science to which the priest fully alive to his responsibility keeps going back, in one form or another, all through life. The issues depending on his judgment are so great; there are such advantages to secure or to forfeit, such sacrifices to submit to or to escape; so much, in a word, of the happiness or unhappiness of his people depending on his decisions, — that he cannot rest until he has surrounded them with all that he can get of helpful knowledge. The lawyer intrusted with a great cause, the physician carrying in his hands the life of a fellow-man, will neglect nothing. The mere prospect of being called upon at any time to assume such burdens incites them to steadily increase their store of professional knowledge. The priest feels that he cannot do less; and so, with the sense of what is wanting in him ever kept alive by his widening experience of the needs of others, he is ever going back to his standard authorities, or appealing to the learning and to the wisdom of his fellow-priests, or working out solutions for himself from data which he feels that no other can so fully understand or so equitably appreciate.

## VI.

Even outside all question of duty or practical necessity, Moral Theology is, for the cultivated mind, one of the most



attractive and enjoyable forms of knowledge. It touches upon, and occasionally leads into the depths of, all the other moral sciences. It implies, and at the same time helps to, a thorough understanding of the more recondite facts and laws of the human soul. The highest of all, conscience, is its special domain; and from thence it spreads out into every one of the human faculties, and takes possession of the whole man, individual, domestic, political, and social. The problems which it undertakes to solve extend to a greater number of individuals, and are incomparably more important to them than those of any other science. As a theory of life and a practical rule of action, Moral Theology is admirably complete, taking in every aspect and almost every detail of human existence, determining the normal duties of each state of life, and solving happily almost all its moral difficulties.

At the same time its teachings bring with them a most comforting sense of security. They are often the authoritative intimation of a divine command; and, even where they fall short of that, they are generally the outcome of the observations and reflections of wise and holy men; or they represent the accumulated wisdom of ages. To those who cannot trust their own judgment,—and who can usually do so with safety in what concerns himself?—to timorous souls, full of anxious questionings, they give answers thoughtful and helpful. They trace out paths clear and easy of access, which the simplest as well as the most enlightened may tread with a firm step. They are an inexhaustible source of spiritual peace and joy, understood and enjoyed fully only by those who have endeavored to serve God faithfully without the benefit of their guidance. To many souls won back from error to the Catholic faith, the teachings of Moral Theology, by their clearness,

definiteness, and completeness, prove more beautiful, attractive, and permanently helpful than even the dogmatic truths through which they were won to the fullness of the faith.

## VII.

Ever necessary and ever interesting to the guide of souls, the study of Moral Theology has become both one and the other in a special degree in the present age. With the growing complexity of human life, the sphere of practical ethics is ever widening. New moral difficulties, like new forms of disease, come into existence and have to be met. Perplexing cases, confined formerly to a few, are liable now to be met anywhere. In the cure of souls no priest can confine himself amongst us to a specialty ; all must be general practitioners.

Besides the problems of a more ordinary and abiding kind, the guide of souls has to meet the many questions arising out of the altered conditions of social and political life, such as the rights and duties of capital and labor, the numberless forms of speculation and methods of money-making in which so many have a share. The whole field of political economy has to be considered in its moral aspects ; the methods by which a share in public authority is obtained and subsequently exercised through legislative or administrative acts. From being the business of only a few, these questions have come to bear, in one shape or another, upon almost all. The man divinely chosen to be the light and the guide of all cannot remain a stranger to them.

The necessity is rendered more pressing by the fact that these questions have been hitherto left almost entirely in the hands of lay writers, competent, it may be, to deal with them in their purely political or economic aspects, but

utterly unprepared for the task, which they nevertheless assume, of determining their moral bearings. When there was question of the latter in former days, men invariably looked to the Church. The voice of theologians was heard amid the deliberations of statesmen, and bishops sat in the councils of kings, not merely because of their high station or far-seeing wisdom, but because to them it belonged to determine the questions of moral right and wrong. When Shakespeare makes Henry V. appeal to the Archbishop of Canterbury, it is not a counsel of worldly wisdom he demands, but a determination of justice and right:—

“ God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,  
That you should fashion, wrest or bow your reading . . .  
For God doth know how many, now in health,  
Shall drop their blood in approbation  
Of what your reverence shall incite us to.

. . . . .

Under this conjuration speak, my lord,  
For we will hear, note and believe in heart  
That what you speak is in your conscience washed  
As pure as sin with baptism.”

The office of moral adviser has disappeared as a political institution, but it remains as an abiding social fact. Whenever the question of morality arises in human affairs, it is to religion and to its representatives that men look instinctively, just as they look to the opinions of lawyers and the rulings of courts in questions of legality, or question physicians in matters of sanitation or hygiene.

And such questions are ever coming up before the public mind. For, though no better than at other periods, the world to-day is more ostensibly concerned to determine the moral value of things, especially of those new principles and forces by which society is borne along. On the other

hand, moral theories obtain an ever-increasing share in philosophical speculation. Every original thinker feels bound to consider the bearing of his principles on righteous conduct. We have the Ethics of trade and of politics, the Ethics of determinism and of evolution. Even such men as Mill, Arnold, Huxley, and Spencer strive with all their might to establish, amid the ruins they have made, a foundation which morality may rest upon, and to trace a law of life which will stand the threefold test of experience, logic, and the traditional sense of mankind.

Another and a most powerful impulse has been given to moral studies, and, as a consequence, to Moral Theology, by a more thorough and scientific study of psychological phenomena resulting from an abnormal condition of the nervous system. Henceforth the theologian cannot neglect the facts of magnetism, hypnotism, suggestion, and the like. He has to ascertain them as accurately as observation or testimony may allow; to weigh the theories which have been built upon them, those especially which take hold of the popular mind; to determine finally for himself in what manner they may affect the ordinary laws of moral responsibility.

In this and in many other ways fresh interest is ever being added to the study of Moral Theology, with a corresponding increase of the popularity which it has hitherto enjoyed in the Catholic Church.

## ARTICLE II.

### *METHODS OF MORAL THEOLOGY.*

In the pursuit of each form of knowledge the unbiased mind instinctively proceeds on certain lines, and follows



certain logical processes which subsequent experience shows to be the most effective. These constitute its proper methods. Each science has its own, simple or composite, depending on and determined by the sort of knowledge it conveys, and by the manner in which it comes in contact with the mind. Thus there are the methods of natural science, of metaphysics, of history, and the like. It is only by applying the right methods to each that it can be properly understood and developed. Wrong methods can but confuse and perplex the inquirer; if persevered in, they invariably lead to an unreal and perverted conception of things, as is strikingly illustrated in the case of the natural sciences, regarding which the world remained in ignorance for centuries in consequence of the application to them of the *a priori* or deductive process, instead of the method of observation. No small share of the perplexities of theologians in dealing with moral questions may be traced back to similar causes; whatever progress, on the other hand, moral science may be expected to make, must depend principally on the appropriate manner in which its problems, old and new, are taken up and dealt with.

#### I.

What, then, are the proper methods of Moral Theology?

In a general way they are those of all the practical sciences, the purpose of which is to shape human action in view of some special end. The end is reached by the determination of the rules and principles of the science, and by their application to specific facts. Thus all practical sciences comprise three kinds of elements: abstract principles; practical rules; applications, carrying down principles and rules as near as possible to the concrete.

Logically, the principles come first; in reality, they are the last to be realized. Even the rules are only a generalization of a certain number of individual facts, and are formulated but slowly and tentatively. Yet it is in the shape of rules that practical sciences first make their appearance.

This is especially true of the science of ethics. Ethics is primarily, essentially, a set of rules, a code of laws. It is in that shape that it reaches the individual man. Children learn their duties in form of commands and rules of conduct; and when God himself vouchsafed to direct the human will, He simply laid down a law of action: "Thou shalt, — thou shalt not."

Rules are the most natural form of guidance in all matters of practice. Facts are too numerous to be considered and regulated individually. Abstract principles, on the other hand, are too far removed from the facts to shape them effectively. Rules are half-way between the two. More easily apprehended than principles because less abstract, more easily retained because of their brevity and clearness, they permit the mind to determine with a minimum of effort the character of individual objects or the proper course of action.

Rules of conduct, then, embracing the whole responsible life of man, and covering the whole field of human duty, constitute the substance of Moral Theology.

But, it will be asked, where are these rules to be found, and what source are they derived from?

To answer this important question, we cannot do better than consider briefly how, as a matter of history, these laws came to the knowledge of man, and gradually assumed their present shape.

In its primordial elements, the science of duty is as old as the human race. From the very beginning, man was subject to the law of his nature, as a rational being, and to the higher law consequent on his elevation to the supernatural order. The former was revealed to him by the voice of conscience; the latter, by direct manifestations from God. Both, as we know, soon lost their distinctness in the mind of fallen man; yet, even when at his lowest, something remained to him of both in the inherited traditions and customs of his race, as well as in the unceasing admonitions of the moral sense — “the law written in their hearts — thoughts accusing or defending them.”<sup>1</sup> What the pagan world continued to know of the laws of duty is difficult to determine at such a distance, and with the imperfect and conflicting evidence that has reached us. Much of the original teaching was undoubtedly won back by the noble efforts of such men as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Roman Stoics. Indeed, in some particulars they reached so far that many apologists, ancient and modern, believed that they had gathered their knowledge from some higher source than their individual reason. Yet the moral doctrines of ancient philosophy, even at its best, remained deficient in many important particulars, besides having nothing in them of that expansive power by which they might reach the bulk of mankind. Hence the necessity of another and more effective teaching.

It came to the patriarchs in their mysterious and marvellous communications with the Divinity. It came to the chosen people, first through Moses and the Law, and then through a long series of inspired prophets, whose mission was not so much to foretell the future as to recall the past, to repeat the injunctions of the Law, to intimate its

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii.

true spirit, and gradually to expand and elevate it above and beyond the letter of its original precepts. It came finally to all, and in its fullness, through Christ and His Gospel.

From these various sources, human and divine, the first Christians gathered their rules of conduct. Traditional practices, social customs, pagan wisdom, and the Jewish law; the teaching of the apostles and the treasured maxims of the divine Master; the inborn sense of right and wrong, — all had their share in moulding the Christian life at the beginning, under the authoritative guidance of the Church, on whom devolved the duty, not only of conveying the Gospel to all nations, but also of assimilating whatever of moral truth was already known to the world, and of accommodating the whole to the manifold and ever-varying conditions and circumstances of her children.

This was, from the first, the every-day work of her bishops, the favorite subject of their instructions, and, in cases of difficulty, the matter of their mutual consultations, as may be seen in what has been preserved of their writings. In cases of special importance or difficulty, they assembled in council, and their decisions became a practical rule of guidance for all those subject to their authority, and often, by a natural extension, to the whole Church. To them, in particular, are due the penitential canons, introduced so early, maintained so long with varying strictness and vigor; and which, more than aught else, determined the moral ideals and regulated the judgments of clergy and laity through many ages.

In this way the body of moral doctrine steadily grew during the Christian centuries, and continued to grow, even when mental activity in almost every other form had become stagnant in the Church. New cases were ever



coming up, and had to be solved. Councils continued to meet, and the ordinary purpose of these sacred assemblies was the interpretation and enforcement of the Christian law. As a consequence, it is to their decisions and decrees that the historian has even now to go back whenever he wishes to retrace fully the development of Christian morals. There is only one other source of information more abundant still, — the authentic decisions of the popes.

For the popes never ceased, through Christian ages, to be appealed to in matters of conduct, as well as in matters of doctrine; and their decisions, carefully treasured, became the practical rule of duty no less than of religious belief. We may follow their action, from the beginning down to the present day, in the early collections of their decretals; in their bulls, encyclicals, and briefs bearing on moral subjects; in the hundreds of "*propositiones damnatæ*" pointed out as perilous by their unceasing watchfulness; in the decisions of the Roman congregations acting by their authority. Indeed, the more we consider the action of the popes in the Church, the greater we find their share to have been in giving its distinctive, definite shape to the whole system of Christian life and conduct.

Yet, although the supreme regulative action was always theirs, in its full development Christian ethics has not been so much their work as that of the schools. As we find it to-day, in ponderous folios or in portable manuals, Moral Theology is mainly the result of the arduous labors of hundreds of trained minds, some among them of the very highest order. To describe their work, will, perhaps, be the best way of showing on what lines and by what methods the science of Christian duty should continue to be built at all times.

## II.

In its earlier form, Moral Theology, as has been observed, was little besides a collection of rules and precepts, comparatively few in the beginning, but growing in number and distinctness in the course of ages, yet still devoid of the unity, consecutiveness, and cohesion which alone could give them the character of a science. To impart to it these qualities, besides completing it in every other direction, was the task assumed by theologians, and achieved so happily that Catholic Moral Theology stands forth as one of the most remarkable, as well as the most valuable, productions of the human mind.

Let us see in detail how the work was done.

1. The first and principal concern of theologians was, naturally, to ascertain the true sense and import of the practical rules or precepts which they found previously evolved in such abundance by the methods already described. For rules are available only as far as they are properly understood, and yet they are ever liable to be misinterpreted. Human language, even when well weighed, is often ambiguous or obscure or positively inaccurate; how much more so when put forth with all the freedom and looseness of ordinary speech! Yet it is in the latter shape that most of the rules of conduct find their expression, be they human or divine. The necessary restrictions and qualifications are missing, and have to be supplied. It is written: "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal;" yet it is sometimes lawful to do one and the other, and it becomes the duty of the theologian to say when and wherefore.

Here was a work to be pursued in regard to every single rule or law of life as it came up. Definition of terms, com-

parison with other laws, analogy, were among the means commonly resorted to ; but the most practical and effective at all times was the consideration of the end or purpose for which the law was enacted. This and this alone gives the full and true measure of its extent and of its stringency.

2. But the interpretation of the laws of conduct, however thorough, represents only the first stage in the formation of moral science. The second consists in ordering and connecting these laws in logical shape.

The systematic arrangement of human duties does not seem, indeed, to have been at any time an object of very special concern or effort in Catholic theology. The obligations of the Christian are dealt with by the Fathers just as they come up before them, and are never brought together except incompletely and informally.<sup>1</sup> The early scholastics scatter them through their general theological scheme ; and when, later on, Moral Theology becomes a separate science, the arrangement of its parts remains largely a matter of individual taste. Yet most theologians, after S. Thomas, divided it into two parts, one devoted to the study of the fundamental elements of moral action, the other to the special duties of man. The latter they gathered around the theological and cardinal virtues, or they fitted them into the conventional framework of the Ten Commandments, the practical side of the sacraments having a special section to itself.

3. Much more important was the third step — that of bringing back each law to its respective principles.

Behind every rule there is a reason. Whatever is prescribed is prescribed for a purpose, in view of an end to be attained by the observance of the rule. To seek for that

<sup>1</sup> Vd. Clem. Alex. *Stromat.* ; Aug., *De Moribus Ecclesiæ* ; Basil, *Moralia*, etc. ; Greg. Magn. *passim*.

reason is natural to the mind. The animal obeys blindly ; but a reasonable being strives to see behind a precept, and even a child wants to know why it is commanded to do certain things, and forbidden to do others.

But there is much more here than the satisfaction of a natural curiosity. In most cases a law cannot be properly understood until it is seen in the light of the principle from which it emanated, or of the purpose for which it has been enacted. In no other way can its extent be ascertained or its stringency determined. Nor can it on any other conditions become the object of an abiding effort. A law, the reasonableness of which is not apparent, may be enforced by pressure from without ; but the pressure removed, it is promptly shaken off ; whereas, if it be shown to belong, as a necessary or integral part, to a system of things which cannot or should not be interfered with, it maintains its hold on the will, and secures obedience.

This is why, in the study of all legislations, the underlying principles are always sought for and set forth. Theologians, canonists, jurists, all are at one in tracing back whatever laws they study, human or divine, to the ultimate reason of their existence. Only there do they expect to find their true meaning and their ultimate value. Indeed, it is by the principles alone of any subject that the mind acquires the mastery of it. Knowledge by rules is always narrow and unfertile ; principles give it breadth and fecundity ; they alone impart to it the dignity and standing of a science.

But where, it will be asked, are these principles to be sought for ?

The answer is : principally in the natural intelligence, in the common sense, and in the moral sense of man himself. The reason is that almost all human duties are natural



duties, connected, indeed, in the Christian, with a higher order, but preserving, after they have passed into it, all their original, characteristic features.

This doctrine, laid down in several places by S. Thomas<sup>1</sup> and admirably developed by Suarez,<sup>2</sup> represents the common teaching of the schools. Suarez judiciously remarks that even the special positive duties of the Christian flow *naturally* from the very facts of the supernatural order, such as they have been manifested to mankind. Beyond these obligations, few in number, everything forbidden to Christian is forbidden by the natural law; whatever is prescribed is a command flowing from the moral nature of man.

As a consequence, moral duty in all its parts lies within the sphere of human judgment, and is subject to it; not indeed as to a supreme arbiter or final court of appeal, but as to an original, divinely appointed means of ascertaining moral truth in every direction. In no part of sacred doctrine is man's natural intelligence so much appealed to, or finds so free a field, as in Moral Theology. And therefore it is that we find theologians, while ever ready to listen to the suggestions of authority and bow to its decisions, yet constantly engaged in testing everything by philosophical discussion, and weighing it in the balance of reason. Moral Theology is essentially philosophical. Custom, human tradition, or authority of a higher character may supply a large share of the original materials; but they are all tried and finally put together by the ordinary processes of human reason.

The principles of Moral Theology are of two kinds, intui-

<sup>1</sup> Vd. *Sum.*, 1, 2, 9, 108, a. 1, and still more distinctly *Quodlibet.*, 4 art. 13.  
 “*Lex nova: — contenta est præceptis moralibus naturalis legis, articulis fidei et sacramentis gratiæ.*”

<sup>2</sup> *De. Legib.*, lib. x., c. iii., n. 20.

tive and discursive. By intuitive principles we mean those which are supplied directly by the moral sense, and rest on their own evidence, needing no proof, in some cases incapable of receiving any outside themselves. By discursive or inferential principles we mean principles which originally reached the human mind through a process of reasoning, deductive or inductive.

The existence of primitive moral intuitions has been much questioned in the present, as it was already in the last century. A persistent effort is made by the positivist and evolutionist schools to trace back all the moral impressions of man to the purely physical instincts of the animal, or to make them the mere results of experience, actions being judged good or evil according as they have proved conducive or detrimental to human happiness. But such a position, admissible in regard to certain duties, is utterly untenable, as a universal rule, still more so as the ultimate basis of morality. The notion of right and wrong is primitive and irreducible. The general idea of duty is unlike any other, nor can it be accounted for by any other. The same may be said of certain elementary forms of duty, such as benevolence, gratitude, justice; or again of religious duties, the existence of God once admitted. They are not susceptible of proof, and they require none.

Other duties there are in favor of which this original intuition may not be claimed; yet custom has made them so familiar to all, and public opinion so enforces them, that they appeal almost as spontaneously to the conscience, and possess as high a degree of moral evidence, as the earliest promptings of the soul.

Finally, there are duties which fail at first sight to awaken the moral sense. Yet they are held as duties because experience — that of the individual or that of the

race — has shown that an opposite course, if freely followed, would prove seriously detrimental to the agents or to society at large. It is by reasons of this kind that theologians commonly establish the duties to which we refer, and determine their extent and importance. Yet, while agreeing with the utilitarian school as to the proximate reason and real measure of such duties, they are completely at variance with it as to their ultimate reason and moral obligation.

No sharp line divides the intuitive from the inferential principles of morality. Duties belong to one or the other category in various minds, according to the habits, surroundings, or moral culture of each. Neither is it easy to determine which principles are essentially intuitive and which are so accidentally.

4. Thus, in possession not only of practical rules, but of principles which light them up and bind them together, the theologian is in a condition to enter on the last stage of the science, the most important, in some sense, because the most practical of all, — that of applying principles and rules, not to individual actions, for that concerns only the agent or the spiritual adviser, but to specific actions, that is, to actions divested of their purely personal or accidental circumstances. Actions thus viewed, and submitted to ethical judgment, constitute the special domain of casuistry.

Casuistry holds and has always held so important a place in the science that it will not be too much to devote a special article to it. We mention it here only as the last stage of development of the study of morals.

Such, then, are the elements and the methods of Moral Theology. Theories and principles, general rules, practical

applications, constitute the whole science. The principles of themselves comprise all; yet to dwell exclusively in the region of principles would serve no practical purpose. Pure speculation and theory may suffice to make the moral philosopher, but not the moral theologian.

The principles of Moral Theology are almost exclusively rational; its rules, on the contrary, are gathered, as we have seen, from all manner of sources—the legislation of the Jews and the maxims of the Gospel, Roman law and canon law, councils and popes. But in their actual shape they are almost entirely due to the labor and thought of the schools through many ages. To the schools they owe in a great measure their precision and their authority. Yet, whatever their excellence may be in both respects, they still remain human, and consequently liable, more or less, to be reconsidered and recast. Even when they remain unaltered, they become fully available only through a knowledge of the principles from which they emanate; and without it they are often misleading. Casuistry, finally, is more accessible still and more helpful to the majority; but casuistry without the moral theories and rules from which it proceeds is little better than a child's form of knowledge.

In short, to the moral theologian the three classes of elements are almost equally necessary, and each one is the natural complement of the others. Practice is as much a test of theory as theory is of practice. Many a principle seems unquestionable until an attempt is made to carry it out. But the practical impossibility of applying it gives warning that it has to be dropped or modified. The happy working, on the contrary, of rule or principle is one of the surest signs of its correctness and truth.

The teacher of Moral Theology may take as his starting-



point any one of the three spheres of the science. He may begin with the study of the theories or general principles, and from them come down to the rules and the practical applications; or, starting from the rules, he may proceed backward to the principles, and forward to the individual facts; or he can begin with what is nearest and most accessible, — specific cases, — and ascend gradually to what is more remote and more difficult. Each method has its peculiar advantages and attractions for a certain class of minds. Each has its special perils. Aristotle, in one of the opening chapters of his *Morals*, speaks of them as “reasoning from principles and reasoning to principles.” He admits both, on condition that the starting-point shall be sufficiently known, and that it shall lead to a knowledge of the rest.

A better rule could not be laid down. No department of ethics is independent of the others — no single process sufficient to meet all its requirements. Moral science is a structure, each portion of which borrows strength from the others, and helps to sustain them; an organism, every part and every function of which gives life to the whole.

### ARTICLE III.

#### CASUISTRY.

##### I.

Like all sciences destined to guide human action toward any given end, Moral Theology, as we have already observed, is based on general principles, formulated in rules of more limited range, and brought down, in the shape of specific cases, close to the individual actions which it is its

purpose to regulate. General principles include all ; but of themselves they supply only the most imperfect guidance. "Respect the rights of others," is the supreme and all-comprising law of justice. But what are the rights of others? And how is due respect shown them? And how far does it extend? To answer these questions minor principles and rules have to be laid down: "Respect his life; respect his property; respect his character, his freedom of action," etc.; while other rules define practically in what shape and to what extent respect has to be shown them.

So again the great law of charity. "Love one another," says Our Lord. But it remains to determine in what measure and by what manner of action this love is to be shown. And so it is with all the great principles of the moral life. They are all clear in themselves, but they all need to be formulated in rules if they are to serve as standards of individual action.

This need was supplied originally by customs, later on by positive legislation, the result being a code of usages or laws by which right might be easily distinguished from wrong. But this method, while sufficient in most cases, was far from being so in all. Something of ambiguity often clung to the expressions of the law; doubts arose as to whether it was meant to extend to certain special cases; or the question was raised as to which should prevail of two laws that were in conflict, real or apparent, with one another. The difficulty was felt, not only in regard to positive, but also to natural law. Thus truthfulness, for instance, is the acknowledged law of human intercourse; yet cases are occurring every day by the hundred in which it may be fairly questioned whether a departure from it may not be allowable, or whether such and

such modes of expression are, in the circumstances, truthful or not. The same may be said of almost every other law of duty.

This leads to new rules more precise and more particular still. But, however much they may be multiplied to meet the ever-changing circumstances, there will always continue to arise new cases in the combinations and in the surroundings of human actions, about which a question will remain whether they do or do not fall under one of these rules. To solve such questions is the business of the casuist. Each decision becomes in its turn a rule for similar cases, — that is, entirely similar, — because if similar only in some respects, and different in others, a new case arises which may lead to a new decision.

This form of development is not confined to moral science; it is the outgrowth of all legislation. Wherever there is a code, casuistry of a kindred kind grows up around it. The numberless decisions, for instance, of the Congregation of Rites, are the casuistry of liturgy. The very laws of good breeding give birth to a casuistry of etiquette. Indeed, most of what is called law is scarce anything but casuistry. Until the period of its codification under the Emperor Justinian, the Roman law was little more than a collection of "cases," or individual decisions, subsequently made into rules. Canon Law was built exactly in the same fashion; that is, on pontifical rulings given on single cases. So also the common law of England, which, different from the statute law made by legislative enactments, rests entirely on the rulings of law courts and the opinions of eminent lawyers regarding single cases submitted to them. Statute law itself soon gathers around it a vast amount of similar cases which practically determine its interpretation, as may be seen in

French, Belgian, or Italian jurisprudence, or in the statutory jurisprudence of the United States.

This manner of development never comes to an end. New cases are ever coming up and raising doubts as to whether they do or do not fall under the common rule or law. The doubt is removed practically by the decision of a court, or by a legislative act; and for a short time matters flow on smoothly. But then comes a new case, not contemplated or not provided for in the previous decision. Is the difference essential or unimportant as regards the law? The question is raised, and has to be decided. A new variety calls each time for a new decision; and, as they are ever increasing with the very complexity of the law and of civilization in general, the work of legal casuistry has to go on forever.

Nor shall we find it to be different in regard to the Christian law. Christ Himself, while setting forth the great principles of the new life, vouchsafed to solve the cases of conscience put to Him by the Jews, — how to deal with the woman caught in adultery, whether tribute might be paid to Cæsar, and the like. S. Paul in his Epistles solves a number of practical questions proposed to him by the faithful, or which he considered likely to perplex them. The Fathers are full of similar replies; and the Penitential Canons, which may be considered in a large measure as their work, reflect faithfully the casuistry of the times in which they were established.

With the disappearance of the penitential discipline, the collection of canons, which had been hitherto the practical guide of confessors, gave way to a new form of manuals, — the “*Summæ*,” — inaugurated by the great Dominican canonist, S. Raymund of Pennafort; continued, chiefly by the Franciscans, through the fourteenth and fifteenth cen-



turies, and multiplied without end under various names in the following ages by all manner of theologians, secular and regular, but especially by the writers of the Society of Jesus.

Something of the science lingered in the Protestant churches during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but, although one of the chairs in the University of Cambridge still bears the name, casuistry, as a systematic study, has disappeared from among them, partly for doctrinal reasons, but chiefly because they have discarded the practice of the confessional. The Ritualists, in coming back to it, have reawakened an interest in the science; and many of them study it eagerly in Catholic manuals. The others are satisfied with what they find of it in the illustrations of moral philosophy, or in the ingenious essays of the periodical press, or in the problems discussed by the personages of modern fiction.<sup>1</sup>

In the Catholic Church the study has continued to be cultivated with unabated interest. It remains the most popular form of moral science, doubtless because no other is so practical. Casuistry, in fact, is in Moral Theology what therapeutics is in medicine, the very end and object of the science. To the student of Moral Theology it is indispensable for the proper intelligence of rules and principles. Hence we find it to-day the most living branch of the sacred science, spreading out into the various departments of human activity, old and new, and busy in applying the laws of Christian morality to every condition and every action of life. Wherever special duties bring with them special difficulties and doubts, casuistry steps in to solve them. There is a casuistry for the lawyer, for the

<sup>1</sup> Englishmen claim, not perhaps without reason, that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is the best book of casuistry in the language.

financier, for the journalist, for the public officer, for all, in short, who in their special need look for light and guidance to the Church. Like all things, even the best, it may have been occasionally abused; it may have been diverted, unconsciously or deliberately, from its original purpose, and made to subserve unworthy ends. But *abusus non tollit usum*. The fault was not in the science, but in those who misapplied it, and they were the few, and their worst mistakes were promptly corrected by the strictures of the Church. Even thus corrected, it may not, for reasons to be mentioned later on, reach as high a level as might be expected under the law of the Gospel; but if the bulk of Christians could only be led to live up to it as it stands, what a wonderful and blessed revolution the world would witness!

We have now to consider the share which individuals may be expected to take in sustaining, applying, and completing this practical standard of Christian morality.

## II.

Scientific casuistry, as it is taught in the schools, is the domain of theologians only and of students in theology. Unprepared by special training, the lay mind invariably misapprehends its positions, and gets lost in it, as may be seen in the articles which occasionally appear on the subject in our secular periodicals. But informal casuistry is the privilege and the practice of every rational being. All day long men are passing judgment on the actions of their fellow-men, and determining their moral value. Each individual is and has to be his own casuist in most things. At every turn of life he has to decide for himself questions of right and wrong. Yet, guided by the principles

which he imbibed in early life, by the prevailing opinions of those around him, or by his native sense of good and evil, he generally pronounces without any hesitation. The more common difficulties he also disposes of with a little reflection. It is only in cases of rare occurrence, or of special intricacy, that he feels seriously perplexed. But when these occur, unless he belong to the Catholic Church, the condition of such a man is deserving of the sincerest sympathy. Conscientious, yet distrustful of his own judgment; anxious to remain faithful to duty, yet unable to discern it clearly; craving for guidance, yet reluctant to seek it, or despairing to find it in the counsels of any other man,—he may have to walk for years, with faint heart and uncertain step, until some providential circumstance, or the slow working of his own mind, shall have at length—if at all—dispelled the darkness.

In such cases a Catholic at once turns to the priest, with the full assurance of learning the truth, or, at the least, of exonerating himself from any further responsibility. The priest is truly, at all hours, the casuist of his people, generally familiar with their difficulties, and prepared to remove them. Yet he too will be occasionally perplexed; but an easy way out of his perplexity is usually open to him in the familiar casuistry of the schools. Just as lawyer and judge turn in cases of difficulty to the opinions of jurists and to the rulings of courts; or as the physician, when his personal experience is insufficient, consults the standard medical authorities and follows their suggestions,—in the same way the guide of souls turns, when perplexed, to the authorities in his own science, the great moral theologians, taking up their original writings, or confining himself to the summary of their decisions to be found in the manuals familiar to all students of the-

ology. To follow them is always a safe and prudent course, for they ordinarily represent the judgment of the best trained and most enlightened minds, the accumulated wisdom of ages, conclusions sanctioned and followed by men full of the spirit of God, the sense, sometimes, and it may be the decisions, of the Church herself. To depart, on the other hand, from a course thus strongly and distinctly marked out, and follow, in its stead, personal speculations or fancies, would argue great thoughtlessness, not to say contempt for authority, and would well deserve the note of presumptuous rashness.

We speak in general, and having in view cases regarding which theologians are at one. But there are many in which they differ to such an extent that they cannot be looked upon as guiding in any definite direction. Or the difficulty which occurs may be new to theologians, as happened in the interesting case of "Ectopic Pregnancy," recently discussed; or, like the question of hypnotism, it may have been touched only by a few. Besides, most moral rules, such as they are formulated, admit of exceptions; v.g., obedience to parents, avoidance of scandal, etc. Then, precepts are frequently qualified by some extrinsic, accidental reason of necessity, advantage, pressure of some other duty, and the like; but only the principal and more common cases of exception have been, or could have been, defined by theologians. Or again, grave doubts may have arisen as to the solidity of the grounds upon which a certain manner of action was commonly held to be forbidden; and, as a further development, even the practice may come to be indulged in without much (if any) scruple by a portion of the community, notwithstanding the protest of theologians, as happened, for example, in the determination of prices, or getting interest on money.



In all these cases — and they are numberless — the casuistry of the schools itself, with its numberless ramifications, is an insufficient guide ; and the inquirer, thrown back on his own resources, has to choose and to decide for himself, just like the judge who, on certain occasions, finds only contradictory precedents, or no precedent at all, to go by.

It may not be amiss to consider briefly how the work of moral guidance may be still carried on in such circumstances by the priest, to whom we suppose the faithful Catholic will ordinarily appeal. To deal with the matter thoroughly, it would be necessary to open up the whole question of the value of casuistry, as it is found in the schools, of its rulings and its grounds, and of the varying degrees of certitude or probability which they offer. For the present we shall confine ourselves to conclusions, and even these of a general kind.

1. When a confessor finds theologians divided on any practical subject regarding which he has been consulted, first of all he is under no necessity of making up his mind in one sense or the other. So long as no reflex principle occurs to transform the doubt into a practical obligation, he may consider the inquirer as free to do as he likes. If he wishes to reach a personal judgment on the subject, he must weigh the authorities and the reasons on both sides, such as he has been able to ascertain them. It is by no means presumptuous in persons of average ability to hope to reach the truth with certainty, even where great minds are hesitant and divided. We claim to do so every day in similar questions of philosophy and of religion. The judgment, of course, will mostly follow the natural bias of the man. According as he is of a speculative or of a practical turn of mind, strict or lenient, he will lean to one side or the other. Sometimes a single theologian,

whose authority or wisdom he reveres, or a recondite harmony felt by him between one of the contending views and his own philosophical or practical tendencies, will determine his decision.

Even though his reflections may lead the confessor to a conviction of the existence of the obligation, he cannot compel his penitent to be guided by it. He may, indeed, apprise him of his personal conviction, and exhort him to follow it, especially if he feels that it would be more beneficial to him to do so. But it may be that such an intimation would only serve to disquiet or dishearten him, in which case it were clearly better to abstain.

2. The same may be said of newly moved questions, so long as no authoritative decision, nor common agreement, nor conclusive reason, has settled them speculatively or practically. An obligation, until it attains to consistency in the mind, either by inner development or by contact with reflex principles, can have no firm hold on the conscience.

3. General precepts, we have said, are liable to limitations; and one of the greatest difficulties of Moral Theology is to establish them properly. Take, for example, the duty of restitution. It ceases, theologians tell us, in presence of a moral impossibility. But what, it will be asked, constitutes a moral impossibility? And in reply a certain number of rules or examples are given us, all helpful because they offer something definite so far as they go. But they do not, they cannot, cover the whole ground. There are hundreds of cases which they leave untouched. How is our confessor to solve those he meets? In various ways. First, if he be inexperienced or distrustful of his own judgment, he will submit the case to another more competent. Or he may be guided by comparison or anal-

ogy. Considering the "*causæ excusantes*" commonly admitted, he will examine whether that appealed to in the present instance is of equal importance, and, if so, he will look upon it as valid. It is in this fashion that most of the difficulties under consideration are practically solved. If there is question, for example, whether such and such reasons dispense from fasting, from attending Mass, from relieving a person in need, from giving warning of danger, etc., the mind instinctively turns to reasons which are commonly considered a sufficient excuse, and by them forms some estimate of the dispensing value of the others.

Finally, as a matter of taste or as a matter of necessity, the confessor may go back to first principles, consider what gives rise to the obligation, and whether the purpose of the law would be defeated or notably diminished if the reasons alleged were to be admitted as an excuse. Thus a certain degree of necessity might seem sufficient in some special cases to justify a man in making free with the property of another; but, if by admitting such a reason, it is felt that property itself would lose that security to which it owes its principal value, that reason is to be held insufficient.

4. The last case to be considered is that of a strong current of opinion running counter to the teachings of the schools. It is a case of especial difficulty, not, however, equally so in whatever matter it may happen. Thus, if the opposition arises and develops in regard to a positive law, it generally leads to a gradual weakening of the latter, ending in its abrogation by desuetude. But while the process goes on, there is room for every degree of responsibility, from deliberate guilt to entire blamelessness, according to the stage which the opposition has reached, and to the state of conscience of those who join in it.

Again, in all matters of justice, customs generally ac-

cepted have a much greater share in determining the measure of right and wrong than any abstract principles, the reason being that each one is supposed to consent to any limitation of rights established by the common practice of the community to which he belongs. In its earliest stages the custom is not strong enough to prevail against the rule of abstract right represented by theology, but where it has finally prevailed, theology has to accommodate itself to it.

The real difficulty is reached when opinion antagonizes the decisions of casuistry which are supposed to rest on immutable laws, natural or divine.

If these decisions were to be considered infallible, that would end the question; no opposition to them, speculative or practical, would be of any avail. But casuists, even where agreed, are not infallible. They may not even be certain; for men may agree, and do agree in almost every branch of knowledge, in adopting certain views and theories, not as demonstrated, but as the most plausible they can find. Hence casuists, like scientists, or like our courts of justice, even the highest, sometimes change their practice. Opinions unanimously held for a time are dropped; others, long objected to, prevail. Their authority, therefore, even when they agree, is a variable quantity — greater when they permit than when they forbid, greater when they lay down principles than when they draw conclusions, or apply them to special cases. A single dissentient voice, if it be one of weight, lessens their authority in a considerable degree.<sup>1</sup> It follows that in the case before us no absolute rule can be laid down. Speculative principles and practical necessities, the judgment of theologians

<sup>1</sup> See on all this subject: Bouquillon, *Theol. Fundamentalis*, Introd. n. 63 *et seq.* Melchior Cano, L. viii. Franzelin, th. xvii. Zaccharia, *Diss. Proleg.* op. S. Ligorii, etc.



and the common sense of the Christian community, authority and reason, all have to be listened to, and whatever the conclusion, if only prudence has guided the deliberations, due homage has been paid to the supremacy of the moral law, and the action which follows is morally blameless.

We have supposed a sort of popular opposition to some decision of Moral Theology. But what is to be thought of individual opposition?

Pretty much what would be thought of it in any other matter. Men of only average ability, who, in a matter of technical knowledge, choose to antagonize what is universally held by those of the profession, or who, in things of general interest, run counter to the common sense of their contemporaries, generally get credit for more courage than wisdom. So in theological matters, dogmatic or moral, to depart from the common teaching is rightly looked upon as rash and presumptuous. Yet what is denied to the many may be allowed to the few. In every sphere of knowledge, men of deep thought and powerful intelligence see farther than the crowd. They have broader and loftier intuitions of truth, subtle inductions and deductions, the correctness of which ordinary minds are slow to recognize, yet ultimately acknowledge. This is what makes them leaders of thought. As such they are privileged, and no fault is found with them if they occasionally depart from the beaten tracks.

The remark applies to the human element of theology as well as to the rest of human knowledge. Theology progresses by correcting what is mistaken, as well as by expounding what is true; and it belongs to those who stand highest in the science to originate new departures. One cannot but be struck by the modesty and caution with

which the greatest theologians have availed themselves of the privilege, putting forth their views in a tentative way, as hypotheses, convenient solutions, and the like, and awaiting the encouragement, or at least the acquiescence, of the schools before venturing farther. The door once opened by them, less difficulty was felt to let others follow. “*Unicus auctor*,” says Zaccharia,<sup>1</sup> “*si sit omni exceptione major, afferatque rationem quam alii non considerarint, vel non satis solverint, ipse autem aliorum rationes commode solvat, quamvis doceat contra communem, poterit reddere opinionem probabilem.*”

Such is casuistry, as established by theology and as applied by the Catholic priest. What priest and people owe to it of fullness, distinctness, and accuracy in the knowledge of duty; what follows, on its use, of peace to the mind and vigor to the will, — is simply incalculable. It has its imperfections and its disadvantages; but, as we shall see, they may be extenuated indefinitely; and even untouched, they are as nothing compared with the advantages of a science which has always gathered its chief inspirations from faith in the Church, reverence for God, and pity for human weakness.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### IMPERFECTIONS OF MORAL THEOLOGY. HOW REMEDIED.

Hitherto we have spoken only in terms of admiration of the great system of moral doctrine which, gradually elaborated by the Catholic Church, moulded for ages the

<sup>1</sup> *Dissert. prob. in Lig.*, cap. v., can. v.

habits and life of individuals and societies, and still shows its indelible impress on those of the present day, even when they have drifted from the faith, and disclaim all allegiance to Christianity. Yet we do not look upon our Moral Theology as perfect. No human science is perfect. In those which most satisfy and delight the mind, there is always something incorrect, or incomplete, or needing a happier presentation. Moral Theology is no exception to the general law; and we must not wonder if, after the steady growth of so many centuries, it still proves to some, in certain of its aspects, unsatisfactory and disappointing.

For instance, this feeling is not at all uncommon with thoughtful minds when introduced for the first time to the casuistry of the schools. Among other things, they are struck painfully by the low moral level of the decisions given; sometimes, on the contrary, they are surprised at the strictness of theologians in dealing with seemingly venial delinquencies. To many the whole science, as it stands, seems to contain much that is arbitrary, or conventional, and to fit in with the facts and requirements of the moral life only in an imperfect and artificial way.

These and similar impressions deserve to be carefully considered, if only to remove what is mistaken in them, and to seek a remedy, as far as the nature of things will allow, to what proves to be founded.

## I.

To begin with the first mentioned imperfection, we may remark that the reproach of disingenuousness and laxity inflicted on the casuistry of the schools has nothing new in it. It was the great war-cry of the Jansenists two hundred years ago, nor have its echoes ceased to be heard ever

since. Doctrines misstated, voluntarily or involuntarily, have often given, and still give, rise to such recriminations. But when all misapprehension has been removed, there still remains enough to cause surprise to many; to the magistrate, for example, who cannot understand how theologians allow what he punishes; to the man of integrity, who finds practices tolerated by them which his nobler sense of things condemns; to the fervent Christian, who beholds the fundamental principles of the Gospel seemingly disregarded; occasionally to the general public, so much louder than our casuists in denunciation of certain modes of action especially unworthy.

Lack of space forbids us to adduce instances, but they will occur of themselves to most of our readers, and cannot fail to come before the uninitiated when they study consecutively our classical works, ancient and modern, on such subjects as: *De Mendacio et Æquivocatione*; *de Promissione et Juramento*; *de Contractu ob causam turpem*; *de Causis Excusantibus a Restitutione*, etc.

In regard to the general question, we are free to acknowledge that at certain periods, and in particular during the seventeenth century, strange doctrines were set afloat and widely propagated by a certain number of theologians; and that the scathing denunciations of Pascal, while occasionally extending too far, and unfairly concentrating all the odium on one class of theological writers, yet were, on the whole, far from undeserved. The Church herself virtually recognized it in the solemn condemnation of long lists of lax doctrines by Alexander VII. and Innocent XI. "*Sanctiss. D. N.*," is it said in the first decree (A. D. 1665), "*audivit non sine magno animi sui mœrore, complures opiniones Christianæ disciplinæ relaxativas, et animarum perniciem inferentes partim antiquas iterum suscitari, par-*



*tim noviter prodire, et summam illam luxuriantium ingeniorum licentiam in dies magis exrescere, per quam in rebus ad conscientiam pertinentibus modus opinandi irrepsit alienus omnino ab evangelica simplicitate, sanctorumque Patrum doctrina, et quem, si pro recta regula fideles in praxi sequerentur, ingens eruptura esset Christianæ vitæ corruptela."*

The forty-five theses which follow the Pope declares to be "*ut minimum scandalosæ*," strictly forbidding them to be taught, held, or carried into practice.

The depurating process, continued by Innocent XI., gives us, in the year 1679, a new list of sixty-five theses still more deserving, if possible, of pontifical censure. When we read them at the present day,<sup>1</sup> we stand amazed and abashed that such doctrines should have ever found their way into works written for the guidance of a Christian people, and that so many of them should have been originated by good and gifted men, or should even have won their favor in any degree. But a closer consideration of the circumstances accounts for it all; and at the same time conveys a lesson of abiding interest which it may not be amiss to gather in passing.

Two things principally seem to have given rise to and developed this laxity of moral doctrines among its supporters,—on the one side a wish to make the practice of religion more acceptable to all; on the other, a habit of following out blindly logical deductions, regardless of what they led to. In connection with the first, we have to remember that the law of nature and of the Gospel finds men very unequally fitted to accomplish it. What one can do without effort another finds almost beyond his strength. Circumstances also make certain duties easy to

<sup>1</sup> They may be found (besides the Bullarium) in Viva, *Theses damnatæ*; Denziger, *Enchiridion*, and in various modern manuals of moral theology.

some, and seemingly impossible to others. And then, in the lives of peoples as of individuals, there are periods of vigor and periods of weakness. Yet the law is meant equally for all times and for all men. The consequence is that, as an imperative rule, it has to be kept at a pretty low level. There are heroes among men, but the average man is not of heroic build, and so the law has to be adapted to his stature. In the early Church, when Christians were few, and secluded in a great measure from the world, the standard of Christian life was high; but as their numbers increased, and chiefly when whole cities and nations offered to embrace the faith, they had to be admitted on easier terms. Still more lenient, in many respects, were the conditions made to the barbarians, the object of the Church being to accommodate herself, so far as was possible without any sacrifice of principle, to the requirements of her rude and uncultured children. Those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were highly refined, on the contrary, strong in the faith, but with strong passions too; while their energies, weakened by the general softness of the age or by personal indulgence, were often barely equal to the lowest admissible standard of obligation. Hence the natural wish of casuists, daily appealed to by confessors in distress, to make duty as easy as possible, with the unavoidable consequence of sacrificing occasionally what should never have been given up.

The theological methods of the period lent themselves admirably to the process of self-deceit. Argument from analogy, for instance, constantly and rightly used in Moral Theology, led on by imperceptible degrees to the most objectionable conclusions. Thus, because it was held lawful to imperil or even to do away with the life of the unjust aggressor of one's own life or fortune, the same right was

gradually extended in regard to the slanderer, on the plea that character was more precious than wealth; to the unjust accuser, witness, or judge, when there was no other means of escape;<sup>1</sup> to the thief who carried off a small sum of money.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, by following out logically certain general principles incautiously admitted without restriction, casuists were betrayed into consequences utterly repugnant to the moral sense. This happened especially in connection with the theories of probabilism widely diffused just at that time. To their injudicious use the historian of moral doctrines cannot fail to trace back most of the lax positions condemned by the Church. Like so many other theories which ultimately prevail, probabilism was very slow to assume its proper shape, and settle down on its true foundations. It came forth, not as a discovery in morals, nor as a new conception of human duty, but rather as a way of accounting for what men had been conscientiously doing hitherto, and what it would be reasonable at all times to expect from them. This, at least, was the principle underlying the adhesion given to it by the bulk of its followers. Unfortunately, the rules laid down and the reasons given in support of them led directly to the most objectionable consequences, of which many professional casuists were only too ready to avail themselves, while the great majority seem to have adopted them as a matter of logical consistency. Once the principle was laid down as belonging to the nature of things, that no doubt could give rise to a duty, or that no law, the existence of

<sup>1</sup> *Licet interficere falsum accusatorem, falsos testes, aut etiam judicem a quo iniqua certa imminet sententia, si alia via non potest innocens damnum evitare.* (Alex. VII., damn. prop. 18.)

<sup>2</sup> *Regulariter possem occidere furem pro conservatione unius aurei.* (Innoc. XI., damn. prop. 31.)

which could reasonably be questioned, might not also be reasonably neglected, there could be no reason or room for exceptions. And so the rule was applied indiscriminately to all manner of duties — to truth, to justice, to the sacraments as well as to human enactments, to the “*dubia facti*” as well as to the “*dubia juris*.” What else could be done? To stop short in the course of logical deduction would have led to questioning the principles; and if the “principles,” vigorously assailed already by the opposite school, had eventually to go, what was to become of probabilism itself, and of the easing of consciences to which it had so admirably lent itself? And so they held on to their conclusions, expanding them more and more, until they were driven from them by the censures of the Church.

As a mental process there was nothing new in this. In matters of knowledge as well as of conduct, principles are often admitted, not on the strength of their wisdom, but as a plausible way of accounting for or justifying facts; and they hold their ground until the inadmissible consequences to which they lead reveal their unsoundness. All right conduct rests on principles, but the difficulty is to discern and formulate them with perfect accuracy. Almost all the errors of political, economic, and social science are the logical consequence of principles extremely plausible, unquestionable, it may be, in themselves. Only common sense and experience show with what limitations they have to be accepted. Ethical principles have similar tests and counterpoises, as we shall see; and it is because our over-indulgent casuists failed to apply them that they were betrayed into propounding such regrettable rules of conduct.

The sequel of their history is known to all theological students. Compelled on the one side by the pontifical



censures to retreat from their more advanced positions, they were hotly pursued on the other by the stricter theology which they had stirred up against them from the beginning; yet, though weakened, they still held their main positions, and the two schools, the rigid and the indulgent, continued to flourish side by side through the last and earlier part of the present century. In S. Liguori they met and blended in such happy proportions that his decisions, commonly followed by subsequent writers, may be looked upon as the type and rule of modern casuistry.

## II.

But it is just against this very rule that objections are raised at the present day, on the plea of its being in many particulars beneath the requirements of Christian principle, of public opinion, and even of the civil law.

Now, the difficulty seems to us to originate in a total misapprehension of what Moral Theology aims at, and is really meant for. As found in S. Liguori, and as taught in the schools, its main object is in no wise to establish an ideal, but simply to determine a minimum of duty. The moralist holds up ideals to which a man and a Christian may and, in some sense, should aspire; the moral theologian, or the casuist, as he is often called, considers only to what a man is strictly bound. His whole concern is to establish the "*scientia liciti et illiciti*." He is in morals what the writer on criminal law is in jurisprudence. The latter may be the most noble-minded and best of men; but, as a criminalist, he has to deal, not with high aims and generous actions, but with crimes, trespasses, and misdemeanors. Unscrupulous men, whose only care is to escape the grip of the law, may appeal to his knowledge or con-

sult his books ; but neither his knowledge nor his books were ever meant to encourage or benefit such people. In the same way the casuist goes over the whole field of human duty, weighing and measuring each of its elements, and confining them within the narrowest limits. Low-minded, ungenerous souls, ever seeking to serve God on the easiest terms, may follow on his footsteps, and avail themselves of his leniency to settle down on a low level of life. They may even learn from him the art of sailing as close as possible to the wind without floundering ; of paring down duties to the barest margin, and of raising doubts where conscience knows none, as a dishonest lawyer raises technical points to dispense a client from paying his debts. But the purpose of the casuist is foreign to such ends. He thinks of the number of struggling souls, willing in the spirit but weak in the flesh, encompassed with difficulties, yet striving to keep the kingdom of God and His justice uppermost in their aims and in their lives. And if he be a confessor, every day he has to do with cases of personal difficulty of which the general public has not the slightest suspicion, and where nothing short of a heroic strain can secure faithfulness to what most people accomplish almost without an effort. Who in such circumstances would not aspire to bring the law within the reach of these struggling souls, and make it possible for them to hang on to God at least by their essential obligations ? True, such lives are far removed from the Christian ideal. But will greater strictness bring them nearer to it ? The Jansenists tried it, with the general result of lifting up a few to a high degree of self-righteousness, and allowing the vast majority of their followers to drift into a total neglect of the established means of grace, and finally to lose their hold on the faith.

## III.

Thus then, casuistry, as limiting human obligations, is a most useful function of moral science, but only one of its many functions. The confessor turns to it as a spiritual physician, or as a judge, but not as a moral guide. In this last capacity his duty is ever to point to what is higher; ever to encourage souls to what is purest and noblest. In the mean time he has to stand beside them, and when he fails to win them to what is best, he has still reason to rejoice if he keep them from the worst. The magistrate may sometimes find fault with his decisions, but it is only in his official capacity or from a forensic standpoint. Appealed to as an observer of human nature and as a man, he will ordinarily be in agreement with him, and be ready, even as a judge, to strain a point of law in order to show mercy to such as deserve it. The strain put on by casuists is occasionally great indeed, and seems at first sight to justify the definition of their practice as "the art of cheating consciences and quibbling with God;" but closer observation ordinarily corrects the impression. It is in fact a maxim of canon law that burdensome enactments have to be kept within the narrowest limits: *odiosa sunt restringenda*; and this may occasionally require what will look like disingenuous fencing. Indeed, it is only by a process of interpretation which in other matters would be dishonest, that many laws of the Church, no longer suited to the times, yet never abrogated, have been practically set aside. A similar process may be occasionally necessary to harmonize the imperfect formulas of the natural or divine law with the practical requirements of life. The old Roman jurisprudence and the common law of England are full of such subtleties, which shock only the

uninitiated. The practice, we confess, is full of danger; and only those can escape it who are ever alive to the inner promptings of the moral faculty, and whose whole souls are attuned to the ethical traditions of the Catholic Church.

Neither can the casuist afford to neglect the warnings of the public conscience. What it condemns he can scarce at any time safely allow; Christian righteousness cannot sink beneath secular morality. This is a wide-reaching principle not always sufficiently kept in view. Casuists who work out their problems on abstract principles are not unfrequently betrayed into concessions which the popular conscience condemns; yet the social verdict is a safer guide in all that concerns human interests, representing, as it does, a general estimate born of daily experience. But it must be the common judgment, not that of a few whose personal interests may lead them to exaggerate their rights, especially when sanctioned by law.

On the other hand, as already observed, the casuist is not guided, in laying down his lines, by the higher law of honor. For honor is one thing and conscience another. Honor varies considerably with times and places; morality is invariable, as based on the nature of things. Honor has its special laws and exigencies for each class of society; morality is the same for all. Honor adopts and adds great additional power to certain moral duties, but ignores many others. It extends, on the other hand, its sanctions to some of the higher elements of social life which the moral rule may commend, but by no means enjoins. Hence the casuist, as such, has no more to do with it than the judge on the bench. But as a pastor or guide of souls, it is part of his duty to raise them up to the highest attainable level of principle and conduct. In the life of a true Christian there



should be no room for what is mean or unworthy, any more than for what is sinful. He should be as truthful, as reliable, as high-minded as the very best of those among whom he moves; and the religious training which does not lead him to that end or in that direction is essentially defective. In fact, for such as have been habituated to dwell in that higher sphere and breathe its purer air, there is no more need for ordinary casuistry than there is for the distinctions of criminal law for the man of pure life and generous aspirations. A few fundamental, obvious principles suffice to guide the action of one and the other; or if casuistry there be, it is the nobler casuistry of honor or of the Gospel.

#### IV.

Here is a new section which might be added with advantage to our manuals of theology, — the casuistry of the higher Christian life. Its elements exist, but scattered through the Bible, the Fathers, and the spiritual writers. To bring them together, and place them side by side with the extenuated forms of goodness, as presented by ordinary casuistry, would be equally beneficial to priests and people. It would offer in particular the advantage of making them as familiar with the forms and degrees of the Christian virtues as our popular works of Moral Theology do with the varieties and depths of human wickedness. It would constantly bring back to their minds the important fact that the Gospel calls, not merely for negative goodness, but for active devotion to all that is best. Indeed, a more habitual appeal to and familiar handling of the great principles of natural morality and of the Christian life would both elevate and simplify considerably even our ordinary casuistry. Its complex rules and endless applications have

put them more or less out of sight, and to get back to them is often like emerging from darkness into daylight.

The same result would often be attained by a simple appeal to the unsophisticated conscience. Casuistry, after all, is much more an intuition of the cultured mind than a matter of applying rules or deducting from principles. The true casuist instinctively discerns what is right and what is wrong; and when he appeals to argument it is not so much to satisfy himself, as to prove to others the correctness of his decisions. In this, as in similar matters of practical judgment, the conclusion will often be more true than the ostensible premises, the latter being of so complex a kind in the casuist's mind that it is extremely difficult for him to realize them all, and still more so to give them adequate expression.<sup>1</sup>

Conscience, then, authority, rules, principles, experience, individual and collective, — all should help to determine the moral value of actions, and trace the line of imperative duty. Each may occasionally prove sufficient to decide single cases; none of them can be trusted alone to deal with conduct as a whole. Principles, as we have seen, run into extremes, and have constantly to be toned down by the practical knowledge of life and its possibilities. When the old schools of Louvain contended that if love is the supreme, universal law of the Christian life, it has to be found in every individual action; or again, that a Christian is bound, as such, to infuse the divine element of Christian motive into every free movement of his will, it was hard to disprove their position on *a priori* grounds. Or again, if we start from the divine precept of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves, to what will it not lead by pure logi-

<sup>1</sup> On the Origin of Moral Convictions, see Card. Newman: *University Sermons; Faith and Reason: — Grammar of Assent; Informal Inference.*

cal deduction? But authority and conscience decline to impose the extreme consequences; experience declares them impracticable, and so they are dropped. So again the well-trained moral faculty is the surest of guides in most cases; but a knowledge of principles is an essential part of the training. Deprived of their guidance, the most delicate sense of right and wrong is easily led astray by sympathies or antipathies, by exaggerated impressions or by morbid feelings.

In the same way common sense, strengthened by the experience of life, has a considerable part to play in the determination of duty; but they who rely exclusively upon it for their decisions invariably lose sight of important positive prescriptions, miss essential differences, and are unconsciously led to make their personal knowledge of things, though necessarily limited, into universal principles, and thus find themselves in opposition with what the wisest and best are agreed upon.

As to the practice of deciding exclusively by standard rules or authorities, without leaving any play for one's own personal impressions or experience, it may be safe enough in a general way, and perhaps the best possible for those who have reason to distrust their own judgment. But it is, after all, only a mechanical method of treatment, like that of a half-trained physician who, conscious of his inexperience and lack of medical tact, deems it safer to keep to the established practice, and conform his prescriptions to the ordinary pharmacopœiac directions, or simply prescribe patent medicines. There is, in particular, in all individual authorities, even the greatest, a local, or transient, or personal element which detracts from the universal, permanent value of their decisions; so that a man of ordinary intelligence may often form by himself a more

correct estimate of individual cases than he could ever gather from their writings. As a fact, the ablest leaders are occasionally forsaken by their most faithful adherents. Who, for example, among the greatest admirers of Lugo would care to follow him to-day in all he permits for the defense of one's life or honor? Who of those who follow almost blindly the authority of S. Liguori feels entirely at liberty to apply his teaching in such matters as oaths or equivocations?

Thus tempered and balanced, ever approaching nearer to the golden mean, full of compassion for human frailty, but without favor for human meanness and selfishness, casuistry will prove helpful to many and debasing to none. True to the spirit of Him of Whom it was written: "*The bruised reed he shall not break and the smoking flax he shall not extinguish,*" it will go forth and go far to meet those who are honestly striving to be faithful; but it will be little concerned to accommodate those cold and mercenary souls whose only wish is to be saved without an effort; and, while ever ready to lessen, if not to remove, what is only a burden, it will maintain in their integrity and vigor those fundamental duties which are the very essence of the moral life, and a help, not a hindrance, to the weakest.

#### ARTICLE V.

##### *LIMITATIONS OF MORAL THEOLOGY.*

One of the most striking differences between the moral teachings of the Catholic Church and those of Protestantism or philosophy is found in the fullness and assurance of the former as compared with the habitual vagueness and



hesitancy of the latter. The guidance of the Catholic Church is preëminently practical; it covers the whole ground of human conduct, and traces out a course easy to most, accessible to all, yet offering perfect security to those who follow it. At first sight nothing seems wanting to its completeness; but a closer examination reveals the fact that it remains unfinished on every side; that, in each one of its aspects, much remains which still may be discovered, much also which of its nature is hidden from human knowledge, to be seen only when the veil is withdrawn, and the narrow present vanishes into the boundless future. To consider the limits within which, as a necessity or as a fact, Moral Theology is thus confined, will, it seems to us, be a considerable help to a proper understanding of the science.

Moral Theology embraces in theory the whole field of human action, and has for its object to determine the existence — the extent — the gravity — the underlying principles — of all human obligations, and of the responsibilities consequent on them. We have to see how far these various objects have been or may be reached, and in what the efforts of theology fall short of them.

## I.

As regards the question of their existence.

1. There are primordial duties which have been held as indubitable at all times by all races of men. Such are the duties of justice, benevolence, gratitude, religious reverence, a certain restraint of the lower appetites, and the like. They are always taken for granted, appealed to as self-evident, and never demonstrated because of their very evidence.

2. The number of these unquestioned obligations has been increasing in the course of ages, under the influence of divinely revealed truth, or as the outcome of progressive civilization. The Jewish code of morals was far in advance of that of the pagans; the Christian law corrected and completed in many particulars that of the Jews. Stoicism awakened the Roman empire to the consciousness of many duties unheeded in earlier times. A steady growth of ascertained moral truths is noticeable even in the Church, the law of development having its application fully as much and for the same reasons in moral as in dogmatic theology. In many cases where the Fathers hesitated, we to-day are certain. To determine moral duty they turned mainly to Scripture. "What Scripture forbids we may not do," says S. Basil,<sup>1</sup> "and what it commands we should not fail to accomplish. But as regards those things on which it is silent, we have the rule of the Apostle: *All things are lawful for me, but all do not edify.*" The difficulty was to gather anything like a definite rule, either from the Old Testament, amid maxims and examples often perplexing, to say the least, and remote from the spirit of the Gospel; or from the Gospel itself, admirably clear as a direction and an impulse, but vague and indefinite as an obligatory law. It was reserved to the schoolmen to work out the problem systematically and in all its details, with the result of gifting us at the present day with a more definite and better ascertained rule of life than the world possessed at any previous period.

3. Yet the work is far from having reached its end. Our books of Moral Theology are still full of varying conceptions of duty. True, there is a happy tendency to agreement on many points long controverted. But agree-

<sup>1</sup> *Regul. brevior.*, I.

ment on such matters, recent or ancient, does not necessarily imply the final settlement of them. All know the varying fortunes of certain opinions ; how some spring up suddenly into life and rapidly win favor ; how others, long universally believed in, gradually lose their hold on men's minds, and finally disappear. Thus, to confine ourselves to a few more obvious instances, it was the disposition of the Fathers to erect into positive commands some of the evangelical counsels in regard to such subjects as chastity, matrimony, worldly pursuits, alms-giving, forbearance under injury, self-defense, and the like. But what was extreme in their views gradually gave way to a more correct estimate of human nature, still weak even when regenerated, and of the practical requirements of society. In the opposite direction several objectionable practices, such as judiciary combats and duelling, introduced by the barbarians, were long tolerated, invested even with religious sanctions in many places, and yielded but slowly to the prohibitions of the Church. Theologians themselves clung for many centuries to the ancient tradition forbidding "usury," understood as the practice of making money by lending money. They were long unanimous in maintaining the so-called "principle of equality" in contracts, to which modern society has substituted the much more intelligible principle of mutual freedom.

Again, oaths were long considered as binding, even when extorted by fraud or by fear, if only they could be kept without sin. Paternal authority was upheld by the earlier theologians to an extent and with consequences to which nobody could give countenance at the present day. Slavery was as universally and as readily admitted in past times as it is condemned in ours. Changes of a similar kind might be pointed out in various other directions, all

going to show the fluctuating and uncertain character of moral rules long unanimously acquiesced in, and suggesting the possibility of more than one point, upon which there is present agreement, being reopened and discussed afresh, just as is happening to-day in regard to so many social and scientific problems. Happily, the reflex principles which play so important a part in human conduct are ever at hand to direct our course, or to reassure us, despite our speculative uncertainties.

## II.

The existence of each duty once ascertained, a second question naturally arises: How far does it extend? to what exactly does it bind us?

Here again we have the same combination of certainties and uncertainties. In the case of negative duties, "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal," etc., the general law is clear enough, as also in the case of positive duties, when they are of a definite kind, such as paying one's debts, obedience to parents, and the like. But almost all such laws are subject to limitations, some again evident, but many others determined only with much difficulty, and leaving to the end a considerable margin of vagueness and uncertainty. Thus, for example, we are bound to pay our debts, but only when physically and morally able to do so. Physical impossibilities are easily ascertained; moral possibilities and impossibilities, on the contrary, as all theologians know, are extremely difficult to determine with any precision. Again, we are bound to avoid causing injury to others. Yet, directly or indirectly, remotely or proximately, we are doing it, in some measure, or sharing in it, almost every day, without scruple, doubtless because we



consider that there is a sufficient reason for our doing so. But when is the reason sufficient?

The character of indefiniteness is still more sensible in certain positive duties. Who, for instance, can tell the man of wealth just what he is bound to do for the needy hundreds who appeal to him, or for the thousands whom he knows to be in deep distress? The sinner is subject to the natural and divine law of atonement, but strictly obliged to what? The Christian acknowledges the obligation of prayer. Christ tells us to pray always. When is the precept fulfilled in its integrity? Again, He describes the giving of scandal as a terrible evil, and the misfortune of being exposed to it as a thing to avoid at the cost of what is most necessary and most dear to us. How are we to interpret all this practically? Questions of this kind arise on all sides, especially in connection with duties of a general nature, forming, as it were, a deep fringe of penumbra around the central light of clearly defined obligations. To narrow this shadow more and more is the constant effort of Moral Theology, indeed, we may say, of the human conscience; and, considering the imperfection of the data, the results arrived at are truly remarkable.

1. The individual man, were he compelled to face such problems alone, could only feel his utter inability to grapple with them. But he knows that he is not alone, and as soon as perplexity arises as to the extent of any one of his duties, he instinctively looks around him to see how it is measured by his fellow-men, especially by those who are deemed upright and good, and he feels safe provided he does just as they do.

2. If he is a Catholic, he looks to the Church or to his confessor speaking in her name, considering that it is part of their mission to warn him if he unconsciously fails in

the performance of any important duty. The Church, in turn, and the confessor gather light from what is found and from what is absent from the traditions, the laws, the accepted customs of Christian ages, from the teachings of the Fathers and the mind of the saints, more likely, because of their nearness to God, to know the full extent of His will.

3. But, underlying it all, — behind the appreciations of the Saints, of the Fathers, of theologians, confessors, and the public at large, — there is a certain fundamental conception or philosophy of human life, individual and collective, of its practical possibilities and of its ultimate purposes, upon which all is unconsciously yet really built. To put it in a few words, the supreme law of man is that of the homage of his whole being to God. The will of God — necessary as regards what is due to Himself — free in all else — is the complete rule of human action. What God means man to do and to be, that and that alone is his duty. Now, without entering into particulars, the object of the divine will would seem to be substantially *the conservation and progress of the individual and of society*. All man's moral impulses lead in that direction, and converge toward that end. It is the standard to which we instinctively compare human actions, and declare them good or evil. Whatever perfects man, singly or collectively, we believe to be pleasing to God; whatever weakens or lessens him, especially in the moral order which is felt to be supreme, we unhesitatingly declare to be wrong.

4. Besides this general direction, there are certain other more special lines of development along which man is led by his moral sense, and which are determined by the peculiar manner in which he is made. For man is not merely a rational being in general; he is a rational and moral being of a definite kind, offering a combination of

special elements, —sensations, emotions, thoughts, fancies, principles, etc., acting and reacting under special laws and limitations. It is just these that give human duty, not only its individual character, but also its true limits. And this is why that unconscious philosophy to which we refer, built on an obscure, yet real and concrete sense of things, feels itself able to determine the extent of obligations when abstract reason is unequal to the task. Where the philosopher hesitates because he sees only the general features of the case, the practical man intuitively grasps all the elements, and reaches a decision. .

In this way, then, much of the vagueness of duty has been removed. The process continues, and is bound to continue, with the result of making man's obligations ever clearer and more definite. Yet something of indeterminateness clings to several of them fatally, and will remain to the end. Besides, the constant change of surroundings, adaptation to which is as much a law of the moral as of the physical life, will ever continue to raise new doubts according as the older ones are dispelled, thus leaving the science incomplete in this as in its other aspects.

### III.

A full knowledge of our duties would imply not only our recognizing clearly their existence, and seeing distinctly how far they extend, but also the possibility of our determining accurately their degree of urgency. For each one of them has its definite measure of importance; each fault has its exact degree of guilt. Between the slightest obligation and the weightiest, between the faintest beginnings of evil and its lowest depths, there are degrees without number. It is with them as with colors,

few in their original simplicity, yet so varied in nature that art is powerless to reproduce them with perfect accuracy. In the Gobelins' tapestry-work each color reckons tones by the hundred, from the darkest to the brightest, passing from one to the other so imperceptibly that only the trained eye of the artist can detect a difference between those which follow in close succession; yet their fifteen thousand different dyes are found inadequate—a true picture of the countless shades of moral obligation, and of the corresponding degrees of moral evil consequent on its violation.

Theology can offer no means of measuring them. It easily recognizes, of course, some evils as greater than others; it has also its distinction of imperfections, venial and mortal sins. But such a classification is at most a rough and rudimentary one, much like that of dividing all men into the good and the wicked, or the rich and the poor. It includes under the same denomination cases extremely unlike one another, an act of deep deliberate villainy and a transient weakness, being both called mortal sins, though a single case of the former may be worse than a hundred of the latter.

The theological distinction itself is not devoid of difficulty. If imperfection is displeasing to God, as implying a voluntary departure from His will, it is not easy to see how it is not sinful; nor is it easier to understand how the worst of venial and the lightest of mortal sins, with scarce a shadow of perceptible difference between them, should nevertheless be separated, in themselves and in their consequences, by an almost incalculable distance.

But accepting it such as it is, its application is often one of extreme difficulty. Thus, we know that the worst passions are only the abnormal development of what are



originally blameless impulses. When do they become simply objectionable, when positively sinful, when grievously so? Waste of time is reprehensible; when is it properly a sin? What amount of money may a man squander in the indulgence of his fancies or his follies, without incurring a grave responsibility? We object to the habit of betting or gambling, yet very few scruple to indulge in a solitary act of either; and who can say just when the gambler may be stopped in his course by the threat of eternal perdition? To injure a man in his possessions is wrong; but when is it a grievous wrong? How much does it take to constitute a mortal sin? Here is a case of every-day occurrence, and theologians in trying to solve it tell us many true and helpful things. They remark that it takes more when one has only shared in the injustice than if he alone were to cause it; that much depends on the position of the injured party, on the view he is likely to take, or should if reasonable take, of the harm done him; on the way the wrong was done—stealthily or violently, deliberately or by carelessness or neglect; on the very title by which he held that of which he has been deprived; for, although the civil law places all cases of ownership on the same level, natural right admits many shades of difference between them. But all this helps more to show the complexity of the problem than to solve it, and in the end our theologians themselves can only form conjectures.

Much more, perhaps, is conjectural in such distinctions (between mortal and venial) than is generally thought. There are, of course, crimes which all civilized nations have looked upon with horror; there are practices which, if viewed leniently, would soon prove subversive of the providential order to which we visibly belong; there are

deeds so frequently and so strongly denounced in Holy Writ that we have to consider them as capable of separating the soul from God, even though their intrinsic evil may not be apparent to us. But even here exaggeration is possible, still more in the region of positive law, where the fear of hell has been made to play more, perhaps, than its due part in order to secure a more prompt and more thorough obedience.

However that may be, it is always a grave and solemn act to trace a line of separation leading to such terrible issues. The Fathers were slow to do it. They confined themselves to what was most obvious, as do those good people of the present day whose sole concern is to know the will of God and to accomplish it. To ascertain just how far they may be unfaithful without incurring eternal damnation, has nothing more practical in it for them than for a dutiful son to consider what faults would lead to his expulsion from his father's home. The distinction is serviceable only to coarse, weak, or ungenerous souls, or to the priests who strive to preserve them or to rescue them from what is worst. It is to help the latter, principally, in the ministry of the confessional, that theologians have carried their distinction of what is mortal and venial into every branch of human duty. Their rulings are naturally of unequal and varying value, a fact which perplexed confessors are sometimes glad to remember, and which might induce them, in turn (besides other reasons), to dwell less on such sharp divisions than some do in their instructions to the faithful.

#### IV.

But, even though it were possible to trace a distinct, clear-cut line of division between mortal and venial sin in

every sphere of duty, it could, after all, respond only to the objective side of the question. Yet the subjective side is, in all its particulars, a no less essential element. Indeed, the moral value of human action is principally determined by the mental and moral condition of the agent, and that condition can be ascertained only in a very imperfect way.

Here lies what may be considered, perhaps, the principal weakness of moral science, its inability to measure, with anything like accuracy, the moral value, positive or negative, of individual actions.

The positive value of an action, as all know, is in the motive. But what gives its moral value to the motive? Three things: its elevation, its purity, and its intensity. As regards the first, even in the order of virtues, there are motives higher than others; and it may not be difficult to establish the hierarchical position of each, or to ascertain its presence and moving power in a given action. But to measure its purity is out of the question. Motives scarce ever act alone. In our most generous deeds there is always something of self; and as for our daily life, we are borne along by countless impulses, good, bad, and indifferent, of whose presence we are for the most part very imperfectly conscious, and whose real power and relative share in our actions are to us a still greater mystery. As regards the intensity of the virtuous motive considered in itself, it cannot be measured at all, if for no other reason, because there is no standard to measure it by.

Still less can we attempt to determine the measure of moral evil. The man who sins is guilty in proportion to his general moral enlightenment; to the special knowledge he has of the evil contained in or consequent on his action; to his advertence or present consciousness of the same; in proportion also to the freedom of his action, which, in turn,

is determined by his antecedent habits, by the actual power of his evil impulses, by his natural strength of will and consequent ability to resist them, by the amount of help which comes to him from without, that is, from his surroundings, or from the grace of God. Now what is all this but a series of varying quantities, of which we cannot expect ever to reach even the approximate value?

All human responsibility is limited. It varies from one to another, and in the same individual it varies with times, conditions, and objects. The case, in particular, of a man who sins with his eyes open is clear enough in one respect. But how judge that of the man who does wrong through ignorance? It is easy speculatively to draw a distinction between vincible and invincible ignorance; but there are numberless degrees in both, and it is almost impossible to say where they meet in the concrete. Between two men who do evil, one consciously and the other through ignorance or inadvertence, there seems to be the widest difference; and yet the guilt of the latter may be very great, though he never at any time fully opened his eyes to the fact that he was unfaithful to duty. Similar responsibilities arising from thoughtlessness, neglect, or the unconscious or vaguely conscious working of unworthy inclinations in the soul, form one of the deepest and most unfathomable mysteries of the moral life. The very freedom of the will is in all its aspects one of the greatest of mysteries. All attempts to analyze or explain seem only to destroy it; and if the world continues to believe in it still, it is in spite of argument and as an intuitive, indestructible condition of the human mind. But the more we watch its action, the more we are convinced of its manifold practical limitations, making man less, on the whole, of a free agent than he gives himself credit for.



The consequence of all this is that we can know but very imperfectly the real moral value of other men, and that even of our own worth we never can be sure. On the subjective still more than on the objective side of morals our knowledge is variously limited, some things being seen distinctly, others vaguely, while many are hidden out of sight, and, it may be, beyond our reach. Such being our natural condition, as Aristotle observes, just in this connection,<sup>1</sup> "it is the part of an educated man to require exactness in each class of subjects only as far as the nature of the subject admits." If, after all, moral science has succeeded in ascertaining the chief component elements of the moral world and its principal laws, has it not done as much for it as physics and chemistry have done for the physical universe? Both worlds offer an endless variety and complexity of forms, combinations ever new of their primordial elements, now hiding, now revealing their secrets, and equally attractive in what they tell and in what they conceal. And as in natural, so in moral science there is constant growth. Through a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the soul, of human nature, of life, the older problems are coming to be more accurately solved, while new questions and new views are ever widening the moral horizon. On the other hand, by the steady expansion of the political, juridical, and social sciences, Moral Theology is ever stirred up to fresh efforts; and thus a new life flows in, as it were, upon it from all sides, and perennial youth is unceasingly brought back to the most ancient form of human knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> *Moral.*, I. 3.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ASCETIC THEOLOGY.

THE Christian life admits, as all know, of numberless degrees, from the most imperfect beginnings to the heights of holiness reached by the saints. In its earlier stages it is a matter of strict obligation; beyond, it leads away the soul from the region of fear into that of freedom and love. In all its parts it falls within the province of moral theology taken broadly as dealing with the practical side of Christianity. But, as commonly understood, moral theology confines itself to what is obligatory; the rest — the higher life — becomes the object of a special, complementary science which takes the name of Ascetic Theology.

The name itself is borrowed from those fervent Christians who in early times withdrew from the world to give themselves up to a life of austerity and prayer. Their exercises of self-discipline won for them the designation of *ἀσχήται*, a name indeed suited to all the followers of Christ, for asceticism is, in a certain degree, an essential element of His teaching, and obligatory on all Christians; but the most conspicuous practices of such a life being optional, the name has gradually come to be reserved to that more exalted form of virtue which is left to the free choice of each individual.

Ascetic Theology, then, is the science of the higher Christian life. Starting from the humble level of faithfulness to strict duty, it undertakes “to show a more excel-

lent way," — onward and upward through the evangelical virtues and counsels, to the loftiest summits which human nature sustained by grace can attain to ; thus containing the theory and practice of Christian perfection, or, as it is more commonly called, of a spiritual — or a devout — or a holy life. Mystical theology, as commonly understood, is something higher still ; but as the expression is used in various senses, it may not be amiss to point them out in order to avoid confusion of thought.

First of all, the term *asceticism* and mysticism are often used indiscriminately to designate the higher Christian life in all its forms. Hence certain writers embrace the whole subject of the present paper under the name of mystical, instead of Ascetical Theology. Others, writing from a philosophical or rationalistic standpoint, give the title of mystical to whatever in religion is unverifiable by experience or undemonstrable by reason. Thus all direct intercourse with God, the sacramental system as productive of supernatural effects, the whole economy of grace, — prayer, — all belong in their conception to the region of mysticism, that is, according to the rationalist view, of unreality. But, as commonly understood by spiritual writers, mysticism means something different, which shall be best understood by comparing it with Ascetic Theology.

Ascetic Theology, as we shall see, is based upon reason and faith. Taking its departure from the data supplied by both, it builds up a system of life perfectly consistent and logical in all its parts, and fairly within the range of human effort sustained by grace. It is a philosophy of life as seen in the light of revelation, of the conscience, and of the common experience of men.

Mystical theology, on the contrary, is intuitive, not argumentative. Contemplation is its home, — a vision of God

beyond what reason or ordinary faith can supply. It may be won, in a lower degree, by certain more favored souls through special methods; but in its higher forms it is a pure gift from above, clearly manifesting the agency of powers distinct from the natural faculties. In this intercourse with God the soul finds a manner of spiritual enlightenment transcending all human knowledge, a practical wisdom beyond that of the wisest, an unflagging, irresistible energy to carry out the divine purposes. To these favors are not unfrequently added signs more unmistakable still of the divine action — revelations, visions, ecstasies, strange bodily experiences, stigmata, and the like. All such facts are outside the province of ascetics; they constitute a science of their own, the science of mystical theology.

We shall have something to say of both in what follows.

## ARTICLE I.

### *ITS VALUE—HOW STUDIED.*

#### I.

The value of the science of Ascetic Theology is so obvious from its very definition that it need not be dwelt upon at any great length. The higher Christian life is the noblest and greatest thing in the world. Its principles and its laws are of more importance to the Christian than all other philosophies and legislations, its methods more important to know than those by which fame is won and wealth accumulated. For the priest it is a necessity. It is his own law of life, to begin with. The sacredness of his character, and the nearness in which he is placed to



God by his functions, make it a duty for him to live up to the spirit of Christ, and to show it forth in his daily life. The heights are his natural dwelling-place, the region in which it behooves him "to live and move and have his being." This he owes to God and to himself, so that already, for his own guidance, he has to be familiar with the methods and rules of the higher law.

But he also owes it to others, — to the faithful at large, who instinctively turn to the life and listen to the words of the priest, in order to gather from them the true meaning of the Gospel; still more to those who have been in any degree entrusted to his priestly care.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that a pastor has to teach his people only their essential duties. It is the whole divine message that he is bound to deliver to them, "teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have commanded you,"<sup>1</sup> the Beatitudes as well as the Decalogue, the various methods of devotion and practices of love, as well as the humblest and most elementary forms of moral obligations. True, it is neither necessary nor expedient that the teachings of the pastor should go beyond the practical aptitude and possibilities of his hearers. But, although the latter may be very limited in most, they are by no means so in all. Indeed, the pastor may take it for granted that, among the number of those committed to his care, there are always some, often many, susceptible of a higher degree of spiritual culture, and capable, if only properly taught, of practicing in no ordinary degree the Christian virtues. There may be actually among them souls susceptible, under proper guidance, of the highest forms of holiness. And a conclusive proof of all this may be found in the fact that a rich harvest of such

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii.

heavenly fruits springs into life and ripens in almost every field cultivated by an enlightened and zealous priest. The seed was there, and needed only to be properly cultivated; elsewhere it is equally present, but dies for lack of care.

The reason of this lies on the surface. The transformation of the natural into the spiritual life is simple enough in its general principles; but these principles have to be known and realized, and that comes only through teaching. Besides, even when clearly understood as abstract truths, they have to be brought down to the concrete, and applied to all the particulars of daily life, a task complex, confusing, and entirely beyond the powers of ordinary people. Only by deep reflection, or by lengthened experience, or by a manifest illumination from above could it be performed, and all these are almost invariably wanting in them. Hence it comes to pass that the first impulse of souls awakened to a sense of their evil condition, or the claims of God upon them, and anxious to respond to the divine call, is to look around them for guidance, and eagerly to grasp the hand stretched out to help them. This is what gathered so many of the early Christians around the cells of the great anchorites. Led on by the spirit of God to something higher, yet knowing not where to find or how to embrace it, they turned for guidance to these men of God; and found it in such abundance that many of them chose to live and die beside those who had made so plain to them the will of God and the way to heaven.

And so has it been in all subsequent ages. The first impulse of the saints themselves was to seek the direction of others more experienced in the ways and workings of divine grace. Nor is it otherwise at the present day. All those who are moved to do their best in the service of God crave for more light; and if, after having felt its beneficent

rays, emanating from some man of God, they have been subsequently deprived of it, how they watch and pray that it may be borne back to them by some other enlightened and holy priest! And if he comes, how quickly his presence is felt! What a visible, rapid growth of fervor and purity of life in the community at large, especially in its chosen members, and how all rejoice to walk in the light of the new and fuller knowledge of things divine!

Since, then, the spiritual enlightenment of a parish, and the piety it leads to, are so entirely dependent on these qualities being possessed by the pastor, in a degree corresponding to his superior dignity and influence, it follows that a knowledge of the higher Christian life is as much a part of his intellectual equipment as any other form of knowledge, and that the more thorough he makes it, the better he is fitted for his work.

We have now to consider how this may be best effected.

## II.

Acquaintance with the elements of the spiritual life begins in a Catholic almost with reason itself, and in a priest it should naturally grow to the very end of his existence. But in this unceasing growth we may distinguish three principal stages: the first, which is common to him with the faithful; the second, corresponding with the period of his seminary preparation for the priesthood; the third, comprising the whole time of his active ministry. Now it would seem that each one of these stages admits of, and, in some measure, calls for, a special development of spiritual knowledge which it may not be amiss to point out more distinctly.

1. In connection with the first, we may call attention to

the fact of the wonderful facility with which the things of the spiritual life are realized in childhood and in early youth. The special plasticity of the mind at that early period; its natural docility and trustfulness; its promptness to take in the broad, simple aspects and issues of life, as presented by faith, without any of the qualifications which later on grow out of reflection and experience, — all help to make the youthful mind the natural recipient of divine teaching, and to place it in close, living contact with the unseen. The strong, clear hold which children sometimes get of the fundamental Christian truths and of their logical consequences is simply marvelous, and makes one instinctively repeat with our Lord: "I give thanks to Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and shown them to little ones."<sup>1</sup>

A love for such mental and spiritual nutriment, seeking to satisfy itself in books of devotion, particularly in the "Lives of the Saints," is an ordinary feature of Catholic piety at this early stage of existence, and often leads the youthful aspirant to a considerable knowledge of what belongs to the spiritual life, long before he has begun his preparation for the priesthood. Indeed, the knowledge thus acquired through reading and listening, in public and in private, is in itself a most suitable introduction to what is to follow, leading as it does, without effort to that early familiarity with the maxims of the Gospel, the examples of the Saints, and the habits and practices of a devout life so much more difficult to acquire at a later period.

2. The second stage is one of especial importance. Those who enter upon it are very unequally prepared, some, like those we have just referred to, being already familiar with the principal doctrines of the spiritual life,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 25.



whilst others are almost entire strangers to them. But even the most enlightened have much more to learn, both for their own guidance, in view of their great prospective responsibilities, and for the guidance of others.

This is the object, during the years of their probation, of an uninterrupted course of reading, instructions, and devotional exercises. There are two things which should be steadily aimed at by those who impart and by those who gather in such instructions: definiteness and solidity. The frequent absence of these two essential qualities arises from the loose, informal manner in which the spiritual doctrines are frequently taught, especially during the previous period. They come in the shape of meditations, exhortations, pious readings, and the like, the object of which is not so much to enlighten the mind as to awaken and exalt the feelings. The exact nature, the various degrees, and the proper limitations of the Christian virtues are often implied rather than clearly explained; and their solid foundations are neglected or buried out of sight under a pile of spurious authorities, misinterpreted texts, or inconclusive, sophistical reasons.

The natural remedy for such defects would be to consider and deal with Ascetic Theology as a science, in the strict sense of the expression, having, like every other form of accurate knowledge, its established notions, its definite doctrines, its principles, demonstrations, and deductions, solidly established and proof against all manner of objections.

*a.* This would imply, first of all, a careful study of the principal component elements of the spiritual life; its end, — its obstacles, — its methods, — its principal means. After a general classification of the virtues, each one of them would have to be considered individually in itself, in its

bearing upon the others, in the position which it holds in the general economy of Christian perfection.

b. In the study of the opposite vices, a method might be followed somewhat similar to that which medical men apply to the different forms of disease, determining, as nearly as possible for each one, its causes, its symptoms, its various forms of development, and, when unchecked, the final issue it leads to. The therapeutic side would naturally follow, showing how to deal with the evil at each of its stages, how to temper, and, if possible, to eradicate it.

c. Next there would be room for a general investigation of the methods and practices which authority, reason, or experience indicate as the most effective means of correction or improvement; such as self-examination, prayer, devotional reading, confession, Communion, pious or penitential practices, etc. One of the most important things to show in a general way at this period is the manner in which the maxims of the Gospel may be harmonized with the requirements of practical life. The manner in which they are sometimes presented begets a sense of unreality most prejudicial to them.

Finally, these various elements might be disposed in a logical order so as to form a system harmonious and consistent in all its parts.

All this has been repeatedly attempted by systematic writers on Ascetic Theology, such as Schram, Scaramelli, Morotius, etc., and their works cannot but prove useful to the student. Yet, in the present as in most other cases, nothing can equal in practical usefulness what each one does for himself.

3. Not much more can be attempted during the course of studies preparatory to the priesthood. It is in the constant labor and varied experience of the ministry that the

developments and the details of the science will come, as it were, of themselves, and settle in the solid framework prepared for them. What was originally done on trust, and in obedience to a mechanical rule, will come to be practiced in the light of a direct intuitional view of things. Principles brought into contact with their correlative facts will work themselves out, and assume their ultimate form. Methods made fully intelligible by observation and comparison will be properly applied. Only thus can the science of the higher life complete itself as a theory.

But its principal development is practical. It consists in the application of the maxims of the Gospel to the details of human life. For it is in this that Christian perfection consists, — not in a given number of distinct actions of an exceptional kind, but in the lifting up of the whole existence, with its humblest and most commonplace particulars, to a higher level; in a turning of the whole man to God. Rules and methods abound for this purpose in ascetic writers, but they can be mastered, like all rules of art, only by assiduous and lengthened practice, in addition to a constant study of the rules themselves. Hence it is that the best guides of souls, like the ablest medical practitioners, are always learning, — learning from books, old and new; learning, above all, from the thoughtful consideration of the facts which come unceasingly under their notice.

For it cannot be repeated too often, experience — constant, enlightened observation of the moral and spiritual facts of life, of the workings of nature and grace, in self and in others — is the school from which most is to be learned. And then, beyond it there is the still broader knowledge of human nature, of the soul in its general conditions and laws and in its manifold varieties. The knowledge of human nature is as much the business of the spiritual guide as it

is of the psychologist or of the student of the social sciences. It is as essential in the spiritual sphere as a knowledge of the human body is to the physician. If conspicuously absent, the consequence is at once felt in the shape of impossible aims, unpractical rules, and injudicious methods. It is not to man in the abstract that the Gospel maxims have to be applied; it is to the concrete individual, with all the individual peculiarities of age, race, temperament, and the like. It is not to man considered in himself and isolated from all else; it is to man as a social being, living amid all manner of varying environments, and bound to his fellow-men by numberless ties, visible and invisible. For this manner of knowledge, the spiritual guide has to wait; but if he keeps his eyes open to facts, and his mind to reflection, it grows unceasingly and almost unconsciously within him.

### III.

The preceding remarks apply chiefly to Ascetic Theology which remains almost entirely within the range of ordinary experience, and develops in harmony with the normal laws of the human soul, leading it on through "the purgative and illuminative, to the unitive way,"—that is, through the purifying process of atonement and subjugation of the passions, and through the practice of the positive Christian virtues, to a life of love and union with God. But what, it may be asked, shall be the study, still more, what can be the *science* of facts foreign to ordinary experience and independent of regular laws, such as those which constitute the mystical life?

It must be confessed that the whole subject of mystical theology is surrounded with difficulties. There is something so irregular and so evanescent in most of the facts,



that it is hard to make an accurate, comparative study of them. Their strangeness is often perplexing, and their very origin a problem not always easy to solve. Unusual facts, like in appearance, may be occasionally traced back to the most unlike causes, — to the Spirit of God or to the evil spirit, or simply to the natural though abnormal condition of the faculties. On the other hand, their independence of the will almost forbids the attempt to reduce them to anything like method and rule.

Nevertheless, the attempt has been made. Side by side with the ascetic, there has been always a mystical school in the Catholic Church, with its traditions, its principles, and its rules. Some of the greatest saints have been its doctors, and the study of their writings is one of the greatest delights of many holy souls. In our next paper we shall have to refer to them more explicitly. From now we may remark that the guide of souls should not be a stranger to them. The contemplative school, indeed, was never more than a minority in the Church; and never, perhaps, was that minority smaller than in this busy age of ours. Yet even in our day, not only in the cloister, but in the world, there are souls that are led by that higher way to God. There are many, besides, who, while habitually guided by the rules and sustained by the methods of Ascetic Theology, are occasionally lifted up to the higher order; and there are many more who carry within them habitually a mystical element which has to be taken into account in their spiritual direction. In the mystical sphere direction has to be far less positive and detailed than in the other. It consists principally in that discernment by which the spiritual guide discriminates the real character of the aspirations and impulses which lead the soul under his guidance, applying the injunction of the great Mystic among the

Apostles, S. John :<sup>1</sup> "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." This question once settled, as it may be soon enough in most cases without much trouble, especially by applying the evangelical rule, — "by their fruits ye shall know them," — the rest is simple enough. It consists principally in seeing that the impulse, divine in its origin, does not degenerate, and that the soul, to whatever heights it may be carried, never fails or falters in the fundamental and essential virtues of faith, humility, obedience, and brotherly love.

## ARTICLE II.

### *SOURCES OF ASCETIC THEOLOGY.*

A knowledge of the spiritual life, of its principles, its laws, and its practices, is a primary necessity in a priest, for his own guidance and that of others. In the confessional, in the pulpit, by the bedside of the sick, on every occasion of spiritual intercourse with others, official or casual, Ascetic Theology is the treasure-house from which he draws unceasingly, and with a power to enlighten, to strengthen, to comfort, and to heal, in keeping with the abundance and accuracy of the spiritual knowledge he has stored up in it. Dogmatic and moral theology are, of course, indispensable to him ; but, supposing a competent knowledge of both duly acquired and kept up, no other more useful subject presents itself to the ordinary priest, engaged in the ministry, than that of the spiritual life ; and it is only repeating the common verdict to say that a thorough acquaintance with it will be more helpful to

<sup>1</sup> I., iv. 1.

him in his daily labor for souls than any other form of knowledge.

Here, then, we have another subject of lifelong study, but not of a kind to require consecutive effort or elaborate research. The main lines of the science once laid down in the manner already described, the rest is only a matter of thoughtful observation and experience, with a judicious use of books.

It is to this last means that we propose to devote the present article. Books being the principal source from which our knowledge of spiritual doctrine is derived, we shall consider briefly, first, how the literature of ascetics came into existence, and next, in what way it may practically be made most available by the priest in charge of souls.

## I.

The doctrines of the higher Christian life flow directly from the words and the examples of our Lord himself. The Gospel is their purest and most original source, and, after the Gospel, the inspired teachings of the Apostles. Yet, in a certain measure, these doctrines are found earlier still in the Old Testament. From the very beginning, in fact, there was a doctrine, as there was a life, of relative holiness among the children of God. The patriarchs followed noble ideals. The prophets, the psalms, the sapiential books, give not unfrequently a powerful and touching expression to the highest aspirations of the soul; and paganism itself echoed them faintly in the distance through its philosophers and its poets.

It was from these various sources, human and divine, that the early Christians gathered their conceptions of a perfect life. The idea naturally expanded with the gen-

eral development of the new doctrine and of the new life which it gave birth to among men. As we have already had occasion to remark, the teaching of the Fathers was principally of a practical kind. It included precept and counsel, emphasizing one or the other according to the aptitudes or requirements of those to whom it appealed. The Christian doctrine, not merely as obligatory, but in its fullness, is what the Fathers aim at setting forth. As a consequence, their ethical writings belong, to say the least, as much to ascetic as to moral theology in its narrower sense. Sometimes the higher life is kept in view almost exclusively, as, for instance, in works written for the benefit of such as had already entered on the path of perfection — virgins, anchores, cenobites, and the like. Again, the letters of the Fathers addressed to seculars abound in spiritual instruction and in exhortations to piety, while in their homilies and other writings, which appeal to all, the fervor of the writers frequently lifts them up from the lower to the higher conceptions of the Christian life, and lands them unconsciously on the summits of mysticism.

The following ages walked in the light of these great men, adding little of spiritual, any more than of dogmatic, truth to what they had inherited from the past. Whatever there was of development was made in the direction of the religious life, and on the lines laid down by its principal legislators, S. Basil, Cassian, and S. Benedict. But, with the great awakening of the mediæval mind in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there came, as might be expected, a considerable movement in Ascetic Theology, as well as in the other departments of sacred knowledge. From S. Anselm to S. Thomas and S. Bonaventure, devotional writings abound, and in theological treatises the ascetic doctrines of the Gospel are invariably combined



with its moral precepts. Like the Fathers, the great schoolmen of the first period aim at expounding the full plan of Christian holiness in its higher as well as in its humbler degrees. Nowhere, in particular, may we find a more comprehensive plan of the spiritual life than in the *Secunda Secundæ* of S. Thomas. It was only later, and in the manuals written especially for confessors, that moral theology came to be confined to the study of strict duty. But the higher teaching continued its course on through the writings of such men as Tauler, Ruysbrock, Gerson, and Thomas à Kempis.

With the art of printing, and the consequent multiplication of all manner of books, the stream of ascetic teaching grew rapidly broader and deeper. Especially after the Council of Trent and the spirit of reform which it awakened, each year gave birth to new writings, in which the Christian virtues were described afresh, and accommodated to the various conditions of life, regular and secular. Books followed each other in rapid succession on every form of Christian piety, until almost each object, each practice of devotion, came to have a literature of its own. The number of ascetic books, in fact, has grown beyond reckoning, and it is ever on the increase. Each season adds its tributary waters to the great stream. A fresh supply of treatises of piety and of manuals of devotion is ever issuing forth, nor is there any reason to suppose that it will exhaust itself. Spiritual truths, while ever the same, will always call for fresh presentations in keeping with the changing aspirations and habits of men. Devotional feelings will assume new shapes in every century, not to say in every generation, and will seek their appropriate expression in new spiritual practices and new devotional writings.

## II.

Amid this countless multitude of ascetic works, some stand out at each period in especial relief, having won for their authors, by the purity, the beauty, and the depth of their doctrine, the popular name of "Masters of the Spiritual Life."

To understand the importance commonly attached to their teachings, we have only to remember the fact that, in the Church of God, there is a divine tradition of ascetic, as there is of dogmatic and moral, theology, and that the great spiritual writers are the accredited exponents of the former, as the great theologians are of the latter. Individually they enjoy no absolute exemption from error, yet even when alone their judgment may not be made light of. They were all men of exceptional piety, many of them canonized saints, familiar, consequently, with the deepest workings of grace, and with all the practices of the higher Christian life. To the knowledge gathered from study and from self-observation, most of them added a wide experience of others, the fame of their spiritual wisdom having gathered round them countless souls already under the guidance of the Spirit, yet looking for more light. They have, consequently, — to use a secular expression, — the authority of experts in all that regards the higher life.

If the judgment of each one singly is of so great weight, their united decisions are irresistible; and, as a fact, amid much variety of form, there is a remarkable identity in their teachings through all Christian ages. We can take up in turn the writings of S. Augustine, S. Bonaventure, S. Francis de Sales, and F. Faber, and feel that we are all the time in contact with the same spirit, and led in the same direction, — a sure sign that they all speak, not of them-

selves, but as echoing doctrines and applying principles which come from a divine source, and have been handed down in the Church from the beginning.

### III.

Side by side with the teaching of spiritual writers, there has always been in the Church another school of the higher Christian virtues from which a still brighter light has shone forth on the world, and which has at all times given a more vigorous impulse to heaven-bound souls—the Lives of the Saints.

The Saints are the heroes of the higher life, the spiritual pioneers who, Gospel in hand, have struck out in every sphere of human existence new paths by which the highest summits may be reached. Humanity honors many of them as among its noblest representatives, and the Church holds them up with loving pride to the admiration and imitation of her children. By their canonization she is pledged to the fact that the path which they followed is the path of perfection, and that the spirit in which they lived was the Spirit of God himself. Their own miracles wrought in life and after death attest the same truth. They are so many pledges of the divine approval, seeming to repeat in favor of each one the testimony given to our Lord himself in His baptism: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

Hence what seems strangest in their words and actions should always be considered and spoken of with reverence. A little attention to the times and circumstances will ordinarily suffice to show how much there was in them of true wisdom. And then, with their strange ways, they won the trust of their contemporaries, and succeeded in doing won-

derful things! Whatever, consequently, we may think of the advisability of imitating them, we cannot deny them the tribute of our admiration.

At the same time due allowance has to be made, even in the very holiest, for the human element, with whatever weaknesses of judgment or of will it may entail. The Saints, to whatever heights they may have been raised, remained men, with the infirmities inseparable from human nature. Christ alone was perfect. But if, instead of their individual views or actions, we meet with principles and practices which they all agreed to follow, if we find certain fundamental conceptions of life and conduct to which they all held, then we may be sure that through them we reach the mind of God himself. In this way many doubts may be solved and many misgivings allayed in regard to the true meaning of the Gospel teachings, or to the real value of certain practices in use among Catholics. Left to our natural lights, or to the recorded expressions of our Lord, we might be at a loss to determine the true value of poverty, humility, obedience, strictness of life, or the extent to which the practice of such virtues may be carried. Or, again, we may be apprehensive of excess in our feelings or in our acts of devotion toward the Blessed Virgin. But a single glance at the Lives of the Saints sets our doubts at rest, for in all these things they are agreed, and in a sense that is clear to all.

Here, then, we have the two great sources of Ascetic Theology — the teachings of spiritual writers, and the “Lives of the Saints.” United together, they embody all the spiritual experience of Christian ages, all the traditions of holiness in the Catholic Church; they illustrate and expand the highest teachings of our Lord; they form together the noblest, as well as the most practical, commentary of the



Gospel. The Gospel, as we have already had occasion to observe, supplies only an imperfect rule of action. It points out distinctly the general direction, it imparts a powerful impulse; but it gives neither the measure nor the manner in which the impulse is to be obeyed. Take the Beatitudes, take the whole Sermon on the Mount; how are its sublime and persuasive counsels to be worked into concrete life? In what sense are we to follow Christ, and strive to be like unto Him? What, exactly, is that law of patience, of forbearance, of detachment from earthly things? What is this sacrifice of self, this daily bearing of the cross so formally enjoined? We know, because the interpretation has come to us with the lesson; but who, left to himself, would undertake to answer with assurance? And yet, without assurance, of what value is a doctrine as a motive power or as a rule of action? But the teachings and the examples of the saints make it all clear; for "that mind was in them which was also in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Their maxims reëcho those of our Lord himself, their actions reflect His actions; they harmonize the whole system of the Gospel with the practical requirements of daily life. Their wise counsels extend to every social and spiritual condition; they teach efficacious methods of overcoming every obstacle, and of advancing securely and steadily on the way to perfection. So valuable, indeed so necessary, is their help, that even those outside the Church who aspire to a higher spiritual life are instinctively led to place themselves under their guidance. They study our books of devotion; they read the Lives of our Saints; they translate them from foreign tongues in order that others of like mind may find in them that fullness of spiritual wisdom which they seek for in vain elsewhere, thus pay-

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 5.

ing indirect but unmistakable homage to the pure and abundant light which shines forth from the Catholic Church for the guidance of all.

We have now to consider how it may be turned to account by the priest in the midst of his ministerial duties.

#### IV.

Ascetic books, to begin with, are his principal resource ; but they are countless in number, and a choice is absolutely necessary. It has naturally to be made in view of his own personal needs and of those of the souls placed under his care. It is clear that his own soul is that to which he owes spiritual nutriment first of all, both for his own sake and for that of his people ; for to be helpful to others he needs to sustain himself. Books written specially for priests are likely to be more available, because showing more directly the Christian virtues as they fashion the clerical life. Even among those a particular choice is necessary, each one having his individual temperament, moral and spiritual as well as physical. The original bent of his nature, his education, his associations and surroundings, have made him open, it may be keenly alive, to certain aspects of things, while he remains indifferent to others. Only the books which are to some extent in harmony with the man can be really helpful to him ; to persist in using others is worse than a waste of time ; it begets disgust, and leads to a total abandonment of what should be an inexhaustible source of spiritual knowledge and strength.

Rich himself in the spiritual life, a priest finds it a task easy and delightful to impart its doctrines to others. Yet in this he will derive a considerable assistance from the works of ascetic writers different from those he has studied

for his own benefit. In Christian souls there is an infinite diversity of needs, varying from one another; yet the priest is a debtor to all, — “to the wise and to the unwise;” to beginners still needing the milk of babes, and to proficients who grow strong on solid food; to the imaginative and to the emotional, as well as to those of a reflective or logical turn of mind. No single individual could of himself supply so many and such opposite requirements. But they have all been met in the literature of asceticism, and it is part of the priest’s duty to know where to find what is suitable to each individual soul.

He is himself, indeed, frequently the channel of these instructions; but still more frequently he conveys them through the medium of books specially selected according to the requirements of each one. This opens before him an almost endless task, that of becoming acquainted directly with the books which he recommends to others; for how can he recommend them judiciously if he has not positive knowledge of them? Hearsay knowledge may occasionally suffice, but the less he has to depend upon it the better. Ascetic books are a species of spiritual medicine; they should not be prescribed at random. The books really useful to each one are those that help him to see deeper into God and into himself; that solve his doubts and settle his difficulties, make duty plainer and more attractive, set in motion the most powerful springs of action, and lift him higher above himself. Many, it must be admitted, fail in most of these requirements, either because they were originally written for an entirely different class of people from those they are presented to, or owing to certain peculiarities which destroy the good effect they might otherwise produce. Such books given to the wrong persons often do much more harm than good. If their merit is so great as

to make them commendable notwithstanding, care should be taken to attenuate the evil by preparing the reader for what might otherwise be injurious.

Thus, to confine ourselves to a few instances, we may notice, in the first place, that the form of virtues set forth in most ascetic treatises is of a distinctly monastic kind, for the obvious reason that the authors, religious themselves, wrote principally for members of their own or other religious bodies. Hence the prominence given to the virtues of the cloister, such as obedience, recollection, prayer, in preference to virtues more suited to the secular life. The universal value of such books is in the underlying spirit that dictated them. Intelligent readers are quick to see this and to act upon it; the others have to be taught it explicitly, else they accept with passive acquiescence an ideal of life which is not meant for them, or they turn away from it as entirely unsuited to their circumstances and temperament.

Another common feature, especially in the older spiritual books, is their mystical tone and language; something perfectly natural, doubtless, in the writers themselves, but entirely foreign to the habits of thought and language of most readers of the present day. To the few whose minds still assume that mystical form, such books are extremely welcome; to the others they are almost meaningless, and would serve only to disgust them with the spiritual life, or to foster in them a manner of piety, weak and unreal.

A third feature of many of our devotional books is what we might call their uncritical character. Around the solid centre of truth which they contain, there gathers a thick incrustation of weaker elements, — spurious quotations, apocryphal facts, questionable inferences, sophistical reasonings. Much is stated that is neither evident nor



proven ; much is built on slender foundations. The conjectural statements of one or two ancient writers are often given as the voice of tradition. Imagination is largely drawn upon to supply what is wanting in positive knowledge.

In books written for simple, unquestioning souls, such features may be comparatively harmless. Stricter methods would perhaps prove less effective in bringing home to them the conceptions and the convictions of the higher life. The evil begins when such works pass on from the hands of those for whom they were originally meant to others more cultured and more exacting. The reaction in such cases is sometimes so strong that it spreads a cloud of general doubt over the whole spiritual life, and drives people into a sort of practical rationalism. In this way there are books, much used and very useful in former times, which are gradually coming to do as much harm as good, and which will ultimately disappear in presence of the growing mental exigencies of all classes of society.

The "Lives of the Saints," that other great source of spiritual doctrine, gives rise to similar observations. In the older, there are things which few at the present day are in a position to understand ; their strangeness awakens a spirit of criticism rather than a wish to imitate. There is much, too, which is unreliable, and those who feel it can scarce be expected to gather much instruction or edification from what only awakens a smile of incredulity. Finally, most of these lives are placed so high above the common level, and are so exempt from all human weakness, that one is much more disposed to look up to them admiringly as marvels of grace withdrawn from the common level of humanity, than to attempt to learn from them or imitate them. From this point of view, humbler and

more human types would be more helpful ; indeed, a larger number of biographies of God's servants in the ordinary walks of life would be a most valuable addition to our books of edification. Yet the truly great are more fascinating, and it is to those high above them, not to such as are nearer their own level, that men invariably turn for inspiration. The great saints come closer to the divine ideal, and it is the view of the ideal that stirs up what is deepest and noblest in the soul.

As a rule, the best books for the faithful are those written in view of their own needs, general and special, and in the familiar terms of their own vocabulary. In this, as in most other respects, Father Faber's works are invaluable. Cardinal Manning's volumes on the Holy Ghost and on the Sacred Heart have also been widely welcomed. For obvious reasons, most of our religious literature consists in translations from foreign languages, chiefly from the French. To say nothing of the old, solid, seventeenth century books, or of many productions of a more ephemeral kind which have proved useful, we may mention, as accessible in English form, the great work of Mgr. Gay, *De la Vie et des Vertus Chrétiennes*, unquestionably one of the most remarkable contributions of the century to the study of Christian piety. But the most valuable and the most popular of all are the devotional writings of S. Francis de Sales ; his *Introduction to a Devout Life*, as bright and as attractive almost to-day as it was when first it appeared, nearly three hundred years ago ; his Letters, his Conferences, his *Spirit*, all redolent of the sweetness, the hopefulness, the reasonableness of that most lovable of saints. Such books as the *Imitation of Christ*, the *Spiritual Combat*, the *Christian Perfection*, of Rodriguez, are so familiar to all that they can never be thought of as transla-

tions. They are the daily bread of pious souls, ever welcome and ever strengthening. For those who aspire to a closer union with God, the writings of S. Teresa, and even of S. John of the Cross, are most helpful. And if we would have what is most substantial in them, divested of its mystical garb and clad in plain English, we have only to turn to two old books of the Benedictine school recently reëdited: the *Sancta Sophia* of F. Augustine Baker, and the *Scale of Perfection* of F. Walter Hilton.

But besides these ordinary and more accessible sources of spiritual doctrine, there are others more particularly open to the priest, and which he naturally looks back to for a broader and deeper knowledge of the sacred science. We refer to three in particular: Theology proper, the Fathers, and the Bible.

1. The whole substructure of ascetical doctrine is theological. It is all built on the dogmatic truths and on the moral principles of the Gospel. Theology tests its every position, and ascertains its conformity with the approved standards of doctrine. The higher a soul is lifted above the ordinary level of the spiritual life, the more need there is of theological guidance. This is why the first thing that S. Teresa sought in her directors was not holiness, but theological enlightenment.

Besides, the dividing line between moral and ascetic theology may be easy enough to determine in the abstract, but in the concrete, as we have seen, it is often impossible. Much, consequently, of what is said of one is applicable to the other. Their general object is the same, the destruction of the old man and building up of the new. Their methods are identical. Temptation, for example, whether it lead to sin or only to imperfection, is combated in the same manner. Prayer, be it obligatory or simply of devo-

tion, is subject to the same laws, and the remark holds good of Confession, Communion, and the different works of mercy. The motives which lead to the performance of duty and to the practice of perfection are substantially the same. It follows that much that is learned in the study of moral theology is helpful in that of asceticism; and we may add that the strictness of method which prevails in the former adds much, when admitted, to the strength of the latter.

Lastly, our theologians often enter freely into the region proper of ascetics. We have already referred to the *Secunda Secundæ* of S. Thomas, to which may be added several of his minor works. His numerous commentators have been led to expand his views on perfection and on the different Christian virtues; but none can compare, as far as we know, with Suarez, in the second part of his great treatise, *De Religione*.

To these we may add the special treatises on the spiritual life, by Cardinal Bona, Schram, Scaramelli, Morotius,<sup>1</sup> and above all, Benedict XIV., *De Virtutibus Heroicis*, in his great work on the canonization of saints.

2. The spiritual teachings of theologians led back to those of the Fathers whom they claimed to follow. What is most valuable in their writings has indeed become the common property of subsequent ages, yet there is a peculiar charm in getting it at the fountain-head. There are those, even in our time, who feel more deeply impressed by the wisdom of the early Church as it reaches them through the Fathers, than by aught else save the inspired word of God. Each one of the principal Fathers offers special attractions: S. Cyprian, S. Ambrose, S. Basil, S. Gregory, — above all, S. Augustine, that inexhaustible treasure of what is high-

<sup>1</sup> An excellent work recently reëdited.



est and most beautiful in the Christian life, supplying, with S. Chrysostom, the happiest and most striking illustrations of the Gospel maxims, and exhibiting the deepest knowledge of human nature in all its varieties.

3. Lastly, there is the Bible, the Old Testament and the New — prophecy, wisdom, precept, narrative, “all profitable,” S. Paul tells us,<sup>1</sup> “to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice.” Who has not found it so hundreds of times, for himself and for others? It was the only book to which the early Christians could look for inspiration and guidance; and since then it has lost nothing of its authority nor of its power to enlighten and to persuade. Other sources of spiritual knowledge may prove momentarily more attractive, yet the waters are always sweetest at the fountain-head; and to it the greatest and the wisest ever come back, reëchoing the words of Peter: “Lord, to whom shall we go; Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv.

## CHAPTER VII.

*PASTORAL THEOLOGY.*

## I.

PASTORAL THEOLOGY has for its object to describe the various duties of the priest in care of souls, and to point out the different means and methods by which these duties may be best accomplished.

This, at least, is its proper and primary object. But, as we find it set forth in almost all methodical treatises on the subject, it includes a section, preliminary or complemental, devoted to the priest himself, in virtue of the principle that the ministry is effective only on condition that in the pastor are found certain moral dispositions and habits which constitute what is called the priestly spirit and the priestly life. These once laid down in sufficient detail in the books to which we refer, the work of the ministry itself is taken up, and described in each one of its principal functions. The young priest is introduced in succession to the different classes of persons who may be committed to his care, and to the different duties he will have to perform in their regard. He is taught how to conduct himself toward persons of every age, temperament, and social position ; what to do for them at every stage of their spiritual life, from the humblest to the highest. The men, women, and children who compose a congregation are made to pass before him, in order to point out their special needs and requirements. Practical directions are given for the administration of each

sacrament. The sacrament of penance in particular, being in its elements of a more subtile and complex kind, and playing, on the other hand, so preponderant a part in the discipline of Catholic life, comes in for a most elaborate treatment. Rules are laid down for imparting religious instruction in Sunday-school and pulpit. The duties of the priest at the bedside of the sick are explained; how to reconcile them to suffering, and, if needs be, to prepare them for death. The science embraces all that concerns public worship; the construction and decoration of churches, the celebration of festivals; all that concerns the organization and government of a parish; the administration of church property, schools, hospitals, etc.,—all the means and methods, ordinary and extraordinary, of pastoral zeal.

## II.

This simple enumeration suffices abundantly to show the importance, nay, the absolute necessity, of the science, or, to speak more correctly, of the art in question. As a fact, the Church has never been blind to its usefulness. From the very beginning down to the present day, side by side with the sciences of Christian doctrine and life, there have been special methods taught by the saints, and handed down from one generation to another, for impressing that same doctrine and life on individual souls, and raising them up to the level of the Gospel. S. Paul is the first to set the example of this manner of teaching in his letters to SS. Timothy and Titus, called for that very reason, Pastoral Epistles. The two beloved disciples of the Apostle knew the doctrines of the faith, but they needed to be shown how to apply them; they had all necessary authority to govern

their neophytes, but they lacked experience. And so, in words replete with wisdom, human and divine, the great teacher traces out their line of action, and shows them how they should conduct themselves toward all those, within or without the fold, with whom they might have occasional or habitual intercourse.

The example of S. Paul was followed by the greatest among the Fathers. S. Cyprian, from the hiding-place in which he had temporarily concealed himself in the height of the persecution, directs by letter his clergy and his people, thus leaving to posterity the most valuable rules for the guidance of souls and the government of the Church. In his book, *De Officiis Ministrorum*, S. Ambrose sets forth a noble and beautiful ideal of the true cleric; while S. Jerome, in his letter to Nepotian, traces the most charming picture of a priestly life. S. Augustine, too, is most suggestive in his letters, and in the short treatises, *De Doctrina Christiana*, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, *De Moribus Clericorum*. The treatise of S. Chrysostom on the priesthood<sup>1</sup> is so well known that it needs only to be mentioned. But for completeness, thoroughness, and practical wisdom, nothing can compare with the "Pastoral"<sup>2</sup> of S. Gregory the Great, as true to nature, as fresh and as applicable to-day as when it issued from his pen thirteen hundred years ago.

Each succeeding period adds its tribute of experience and wholesome counsel. S. Isidore, S. Peter Damian, S. Bernard; popes, councils, kings, alive to the interests of the Church; holy bishops, all along the course of Christian ages, — recall in turn the requirements of clerical action. In these last centuries the chief legislator and guide of the clergy is S. Charles Borromeo, the great reformer of the

<sup>1</sup> *De Sacerdotio*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Cura Pastoralis*.



sixteenth century. What he succeeded in accomplishing in his diocese, in his province, and in the whole Church by his example and his action in the Council of Trent, is unparalleled in the history of Christianity. The *Acta Ecclesiæ Mediolanensis*, which summarize his work, are a marvel of wisdom, sagacity, and zeal; and their influence is felt down to the present day in every department of ecclesiastical organization and discipline.

Since the Council of Trent, and especially within the last century and a half, a considerable number of formal treatises on Pastoral Theology have appeared in the principal Catholic countries of Europe. In Germany, where they abound, they offer something more systematic and more complete than elsewhere, taking position side by side with the other branches of theological science in the regular curriculum, and embodying such subjects as Liturgy and Homiletics, which in other countries are made the object of separate treatment.

The French Church, earlier in the field, followed a different course. The first concern of zealous bishops was to attend to the needs of pastors already entrusted with the care of souls, and to place in their hands such practical instructions as would guide them in the various duties of their ministry. This was the object of several "Pastorals," as such works were called, published at the close of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. Later on the purpose was carried out in the shape of commentaries on the various rituals in use in different parts of the country. The rituals of Toulon, of Langres, of Belley, of Paris, not to mention others less known, deal with almost all the duties of the ministry, and cover, though in less formal and scientific shape, the same ground as the "Pastoraltheologien" of Germany. Two works of special

importance written by exiled priests during the great French Revolution have exercised a deep influence on the clergy all through the present century: the *Méthode pour le gouvernement des paroisses*, and the *Miroir du Clergé*. Two other writers of later date bring their principles and spirit nearer to the present generation: Dieulin in his *Bon Curé au dixneuvième siècle*, and Abbé Dubois in his various works on the clerical life, particularly his book on sacerdotal zeal, translated into the principal European languages. In Italy we may mention, as proceeding on the same lines, Frassinetti, well known among us in its English translation, and Berardi,<sup>1</sup> of still more recent date. Spain can boast of at least one excellent systematic work on the subject: *Thesaurus Sacerdotalis*, by Mach, S. J.; and Hungary has given another<sup>2</sup> by Radliasky. The poverty of the English literature of the subject, so natural in the circumstances, was already in some measure redeemed by the beautiful and popular work of Cardinal Manning, *The Eternal Priesthood*, and Bishop Moriarty's *Allocutions to his Clergy*; while the American Church could show a most valuable collection of rules and directions for pastoral life and action in the Second and Third Plenary Councils of Baltimore, besides the *Directorium Pastorale* of F. Valuy, and the *Catholic Priesthood* of F. Muller. But the recent work of Cardinal Gibbons, *The Ambassador of Christ*, — interesting and practical as all that comes from his pen, — and Dr. Stang's *Pastoral Theology*, written specially for the clergy of the United States, meet almost completely our present requirements.

Finally, the need of these practical helps to the ministry is such that it has been felt even outside of the Church. Within the present century especially, a considerable num-

<sup>1</sup> *Praxis confess. et pastor.*

<sup>2</sup> *Theologia Pastoralis.*

ber of "Guides to the Ministry" have been published by Protestants of various denominations.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

It may well be imagined that so practical a need is not neglected in the preparatory work of our Catholic seminaries. In such of them as are formed on the German plan, Pastoral Theology is taught in the same way as the other sciences. But even where different methods prevail, it is by no means lost sight of. First of all, several of its branches, such as liturgy and homiletics, are the matter of special courses. Theology itself is taught, not as a pure speculation, but with a constant view to the use to which it is to be turned. Special exercises of casuistry and of popular instruction are introduced to show how the most exalted doctrines of the faith may be brought down to the level of ordinary minds, and the principles of Christian morals applied to the circumstances of daily life. The same practical direction is given to ascetic theology, its principles being considered, not only in themselves, but in the manner in which they should fashion the mind and conduct of the priest, and, through the priest, those of the people. Even in the exercises of devotion, the work of the future is never lost sight of. The books for spiritual reading bear frequently on the prospective labors of the mission. In this way the youthful minds of the aspirants are made familiar with their coming duties long before they reach

<sup>1</sup> Among others we may mention: In German, Harms, *Pastoral theologie*; Zezserwits, *System der praktischen theologie*; Osterzee, *Praktische theologie*, recently translated into English. In French, Vinet, *Théologie pastorale*, also translated. In English, Bridges' *Christian Ministry*; Blunt, *Directorium pastorale*; Burgon, *A Treatise on the Pastoral Office*; Fairbairn, *Pastoral Theology*; Hoppin (New York), *Pastoral Theology*, etc.

them. Sound principles are imbibed, wise rules are earned, and supply at the outset the place of personal experience. Finally, the last months of preparation are mainly devoted to a revision of what is most practical and of most immediate use for the work now near at hand. Consequently, when it comes, the young priest is not unprepared for it. Yet much is still wanting. No amount of instructions, no rules, however excellent, can replace the direct experience of facts, the personal reflections which they awaken, the further research they lead to, and that perpetual working, conscious and unconscious, of the open, progressive mind by which all practical knowledge reaches its maturity. In this way the knowledge of Pastoral Theology continues to grow, partly of itself, partly by the effort and industry of each individual priest; and for the means of keeping up that manner of study he is never at a loss.

First of all he has his manuals and text-books of theology, which he may read over and over again without exhausting their suggestiveness. Practical books mean so much more when read in the light of new and ever accumulating facts! And then they are to hand in such variety! In moral theology alone, to say nothing of more ancient works, there is the theology of S. Liguori, with all its adaptations; Gury, Scavini, Ballerini, Sabetti, Lemkuhl, Marc, Aertnys; the works of Carrière, Bouquillon, d'Annibale, Muller, etc. The perusal of such books, especially if habitual and consecutive, not only keeps alive the knowledge already acquired, but widens and deepens it incessantly. While teaching all the same doctrines substantially, each writer has his own points of view, his own illustrations, his own problems; and these add always something to the store of pastoral knowledge supplied by the others.

The very books of devotion which the priest uses con-



stantly help in the same direction, one of their objects being ever to keep before his eyes a picture of his duties. Such works as the *Instructio Sacerdotum* of Molina, the *Selva* of S. Liguori, the *Memoriale vite Sacerdotalis* of Arvisenet, the meditations of Scotti, Brandt, Chevassu, Chaignon, Bacuès, and scores of others, carry the reader over the whole field of pastoral duty. For those whose time allows, and tastes lead to something more thorough, there are the technical works already referred to, many written in Latin, and accessible to all clerics,<sup>1</sup> others in English and in French, such as those referred to above, to which many more might be added; but nowhere do we find anything so complete as in the ecclesiastical literature of Germany.<sup>2</sup>

Another inexhaustible source of practical instruction and inspiration for the work of the ministry is to be found in the lives of those who have been signally successful in it. Just as statesmanship is studied in the lives of great statesmen, or the art of war in the lives of great military chieftains, so is the art of pastoral action and government learned from the lives of great pastors of souls. There is a lesson in every page of their history. We see them at work; we watch their methods; we notice how they deal with all manner of difficulties and with all classes of people; we discern the hidden springs of their action and the spirit which animated them; we follow them in the con-

<sup>1</sup> Such are the admirable *Catechismus ad parochos* ordered by the Council of Trent, the *Instructio parochorum* of S. Charles; *Bonus Pastor* (Obstraet), Molina, already mentioned; Zöhner, *Institutiones practicæ*; Schneider, *Manuale Sacerdotum*; Weymays, *Vir Apostolicus*; Dinouart, *Manuale Pastorum*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> We may mention, among the best, Sailer, *Vorlesungen aus der Pastoraltheologie*; Amberger, *Pastoraltheologie*; Schlick, *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*; Reminger, *Pastoraltheologie*, in Herder's *Theologische Bibliothek*, etc.

ception, the organization, and the working of their plans for the extension of the reign of Christ; we catch something of the secret by which they drew souls so wonderfully to themselves and to God. Who has not felt this as he dwelt admiringly on the actions and utterances of such men as S. Francis de Sales, S. Vincent de Paul, S. Francis Xavier, S. Philip Neri, Olier, De la Salle, the Venerable Curé of Ars? Especially instructive to each priest are the lives of those who labored in conditions similar to his own. Much may be learned in this way from the history of our early bishops and missionaries, Cheverus, Flaget, Bruté, Nerinx, Galitzin, etc., and from that of men still nearer to us, such as Neumann, de Smet, Wadhams, and Hecker.

But the great training-school of Pastoral Theology is the experience of life. For, as already observed, Pastoral Theology is not so much a science as an art; the art of arts, S. Gregory calls it, *ars artium regimen animarum*; and like all arts, it is learned principally by observation and practice. Science supplies only the underlying principles; art teaches how to apply them. Thus engineering is based on mathematics and the natural sciences; but a perfect knowledge of them does not suffice to make an engineer. Medicine implies a knowledge of the human frame; but the ablest anatomist or physiologist may make a very poor practitioner. In the same way dogmatic, moral, and ascetic theology prepare a candidate for the ministry, but do not suffice to fit him for it; and even with the other helps to which we have referred, he still remains very inadequately equipped for his work at the outset. As a consequence, when he takes up the active duties of the ministry, like all those who begin a work with which they are unfamiliar, he instinctively looks around to see how others do. He watches closely the methods of those who are known to

be most successful, and tries to read the secret of their success. When the occasion offers, he questions them in order to ascertain by what principles they are guided, and how they apply them. It is mostly in this way that business of all kinds is learned. Indeed, the conduct of life in every direction is almost entirely a matter of tradition and imitation.

But what calls for a still more assiduous study, and supplies, when properly studied, a manner of help still more effective, is the very subject matter of pastoral action, that is, the people themselves.

“The good shepherd knows his sheep.” He knows their thoughts, their tastes, their aims, the secret aspirations of their souls; he knows the springs of action which determine the direction and the intensity of their lives. He knows their troubles, their difficulties, their hopes, their fears. He is familiar with the forms of evil which prevail among them; he knows where their weakness lies, and where their strength. His knowledge is not confined to categories; “he calls his sheep by name,” that is, he knows them individually. How else could he, as a spiritual physician, prescribe the proper remedies for their infirmities? How administer the proper nutriment to each, milk to the babes, and solid food to the strong? The pastor is likened unto the husbandman; and the husbandman must know, not only the seed he sows, but also the manner of soil it requires, and the proper time for sowing it. He has to watch its growth, to remove what he recognizes as hurtful, to gather the ripe harvest, and safely to garner it.

Behind the knowledge of individual souls, there is the broader knowledge of human nature. We have referred to it several times already, but we cannot do so too often.

*"The proper study of mankind is man,"* says the poet; but still more is it the proper study of the priest. Without the knowledge of human nature a priest may be a great metaphysician or a great scholar, but he is of little use as a shepherd of souls. He can neither preach, nor counsel, nor caution with effect. His teaching strikes too high or too low, or beside the mark.

This knowledge, the most necessary of all, is also the most accessible of all. It may be acquired without any study, — simply by listening, looking around, and thinking. And if sought for in books, it may be found in all, in history, in poetry, in fiction. What is history but the working of human nature in individuals and in nations? What is poetry but the revelation of the higher thoughts and aspirations of man set forth in rhythmical form? What is fiction, if of any value, but a series of characteristic pictures of human life? Even deprived of books and of all intercourse with others, each one has with him one companion, at least, whom he can always observe, and one book which ever lies open before him. The companion is himself; the book is his own heart. The question was one day put to Massillon, "Where did you get that marvelous knowledge of the human heart which reveals itself in all your sermons?" He answered, "Simply by looking into my own." As a fact, we all have in us the same primordial elements, only developed in different degrees. The main features of human nature, morally as physically, are everywhere and always the same; and what is characteristic of each individual because of its prominence, is initially in all the others. Consciously or unconsciously, each one carries within him the beginnings of what, unfolded, makes the criminal or the saint. With attention awakened to catch the earliest developments, or even the



first stirrings of good and evil within him, and imagination to develop them, he can see himself in numberless possible shapes; and through the ideal visions of self he can see into the realities of others.

Such is Pastoral Theology, a compound of intuition, experience, and positive knowledge, inexhaustible as a science, as an art never sufficiently known. It is the crowning, for the pastor of souls, of all other forms of knowledge, the connecting link by which all ecclesiastical science is placed in contact with its ultimate object. True, while never entirely out of sight from the beginning, it should not occupy the foreground in the period of preparation, because studies of a purely practical kind lack depth, and fail to strengthen the mind. But sacred knowledge once mastered, the chief effort must be in the direction of its endless applications; and thus Pastoral Theology will have the largest share of all in the pastoral life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CANON LAW.

HUMAN conduct is ruled principally by the natural and by the divine law ; and it is the mission, as we have seen, of moral theology to verify, to explain, and to apply the prescriptions of one and the other to the various conditions and circumstances of human life. But, even when thus expanded, neither the natural nor the divine law, separate or combined, has ever been found sufficient for the guidance of man, so long as they have been kept strictly within their respective limits. Clear and precise, touching many forms of duty, they remain, in regard to others, vague and indefinite. Hence the need, felt at all times, to supplement them by further enactments ; and this is the first object of human laws,—to determine authoritatively the measure and manner in which the law of nature and the law of God have to be carried out.

A further object of human laws is to transform into strict duties, positive or negative, the performance or the avoidance of certain actions in which the common welfare is interested, yet not to such a degree as to make them be formally commanded by a divine precept, or by man's moral nature. Such are the religious ordinances of the Church touching public ceremonial, or certain practices of the private life ; such the numberless enactments of our legislatures, for the security, or for the improvement, of the community at large. In all societies composed of men,

there is a legislative power ever at work, organizing, regulating, commanding, and forbidding; establishing new rules, and setting aside old ones which have served their purpose. It is a power of this kind, existing in the Church from the beginning, that gives birth to Canon Law.

Canon Law, then, is the same thing as Church Law. It comprises all the institutions, enactments and rules, which take their origin, and derive their binding power, from the authority of the Church.

The existence of this authority is a fundamental doctrine of the Catholic faith. Christ gave to His kingdom on earth the abiding form and attributes of a visible society, with the corresponding power of completing its organization, and guiding its members towards the end for which it was established. Such a power was especially necessary in the Church, Christ Himself having established nothing beyond the supreme authority given to Peter, with the essential elements of the hierarchy, of the sacraments, and of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. All the rest He left to His Apostles and to their successors, to be worked out in due course, under the guidance of His spirit.

In the use of this power the Church proceeded on the same lines as all other societies. In corporate bodies generally there is need, first of all, of some sort of organization, by which their various elements may hold together and work harmoniously, in view of the end for which they have been associated. This organization naturally develops with each society; the more elaborate its functions become, and the vaster its sphere of action, the more its organization grows in complexity; and as they expand together, so also changes in one lead to corresponding changes in the other. The legislative, the judiciary, the executive powers, essential to all societies, gradually take shape, and proceed

to perform their different functions. Rules are laid down to determine the forms and limits of their action; the rights and duties of individuals are defined; and penalties of various kinds are enacted against those who depart from, or disturb, the established order.

All this we find in the Church. First, from the divine root of the primacy and of the episcopate, we witness an organic growth, gradually embracing, according to the divine promise, all the kingdoms of the earth, dividing them up into patriarchates, provinces, dioceses, etc., with corresponding ecclesiastical dignities, from the Sovereign Pontiff down to the humblest cleric, and assigning to each his respective powers, privileges, and duties.

Next, around the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Church builds up a ritual, the most majestic and impressive in its general features, and the most elaborate in its details, that the world ever knew. To the essential elements of the sacraments, divinely established, she adds the beauty of mystic and symbolic ceremonial.

Again, the better to secure the observance of their moral and religious duties, she surrounds her children with a rampart of special prescriptions, such as prayers, fasts, and the like. For those among them who formally devote themselves to the higher life, she shows herself especially solicitous.

Finally, to guide her various courts, established not only under the shadow of the pontifical throne, but in every ecclesiastical province and in every diocese, she has her statutes of procedure, her criminal law, her categories of gross offenses, trespasses, and misdemeanors, each and all with their corresponding penalties. In a word, the laws and ordinances of the Church assume in turn all the legislative forms to be found in civil societies, while



in elaborateness they surpass them all. There is something almost crushing in the very sight of the written records of ecclesiastical law ; countless ponderous volumes filled with the decrees of Popes, the decisions of pontifical congregations, the enactments of general councils, of provincial and diocesan synods, the endless commentaries of canonists — a vast and venerable monument of the solicitude, the experience, the wisdom, and the zeal of the Church through all Christian ages.

Such is Canon Law in its broader sense. It comprises the whole legislative work of the Church, from the directions of S. Paul to the early Christian communities he had founded, down to the most recent enactments of Leo XIII. But in its narrower and more usual acceptation, it extends only to that part of ecclesiastical legislation which is actually in vigor ; and it is in this restricted sense that we propose to deal with it, first of all.

## ARTICLE I.

### *PAST AND PRESENT OF CANON LAW.*

#### I.

It is obvious, in a general way, that a priest, especially if he be in charge of souls, cannot remain a stranger to the laws of the Church. Even the faithful are bound to know something of them, since they have to observe them ; and, as a fact, such as are of ordinary application find their place in our catechisms, side by side with the commandments of God. As for the others, it is the mission of the priest to see that they are duly carried out. He is the representative of the Church among the faithful, as he is the representative of God ; he teaches her ordinances, and

enforces them, as he does those of the divine and natural law. Fasts, feasts, religious celebrations of all kinds in which the faithful have a share, the manifold requirements of Christian matrimony, and of the other sacraments, — whatever, in a word, the Church enjoins, habitually or occasionally, on her children, it is the business of the pastor to know.

But there is another set of laws, much more elaborate, of which he can afford just as little to remain in ignorance; they are the laws which regard himself.

The life of a priest is of such importance that the Church has been always busy about it. In a long series of enactments, many of them going back to the early ages of Christianity, she has taken up and regulated every part and every aspect of it. She has determined the dress he shall wear, and the prayers he shall say, the pursuits he may follow, and the recreations he must not indulge in, as unsuited to his character. She has special prescriptions for each position he may hold, for almost each duty he has to perform. At the same time she watches over his dignity, and secures him in his rights, placing strong barriers to preserve him from the violence of the crowd, or from the arbitrary action of those above him. In a word, the priest lives and moves by rule; he is guarded by rule on all sides; to the ordinances of the Church he has to turn, in every emergency and at every step, for protection and guidance, so that here again, in a new and wider shape, a knowledge of Church law becomes one of the essential requirements of his calling.

But if to the character and ordinary functions of the priesthood any special authority be added, a new and considerable degree of canonical science becomes necessary. A bishop needs it at every turn in the administration of

his diocese; and what is true of a bishop is almost equally so of a vicar-general, wielding as he does a certain amount, sometimes a considerable amount, of episcopal authority. The same may be said, in due proportion, of all the officers who have a share in the government of a diocese; the Chancellor, the Secretary, the Consultors, the *Procurator Fiscalis*, the *Judices Causarum*, etc. All need a special knowledge of the statutes and rules they have to apply, and behind it a more than ordinary grasp of the general methods and spirit of Church legislation. Indeed, we may say that the study of the canons has been looked upon, almost from the beginning, as one of the ordinary duties of the priest. "*Nulli Sacerdotum*," writes the Pope S. Celestine, "*liceat canones ignorare, nec quidquam facere quod Patrum possit regulis obviare. Quæ enim a nobis res digne servabitur si decretalium norma constitutorum pro aliquorum libitu, licentia populis permissa, frangatur.*"<sup>1</sup> It may be interesting to describe in a few words how this solemn injunction was carried out in the course of Christian ages.

## II.

The laws of the Church, as all know, came into existence, not in a consecutive, systematic shape, but as a series of decrees or decisions, laid down, as occasion required, by popes, by councils, ecumenical or sectional, by individual bishops, whose wisdom and authority were such that their ordinances and their very maxims were often adopted by other churches, and, finally, became the common jurisprudence of Christendom. Rules of this kind being practically necessary to bishops and priests, collections of them, accommodated to the more ordinary needs, began to be

<sup>1</sup> Dist. xxviii., Can. 4.

made at an early period, in the Eastern and Western Churches. From the so-called *Apostolic Constitutions*, and *Canons of the Apostles*, down to the *Decretum* of Gratian in the twelfth century, many such collections were in use. They served as practical guides for the administration of the sacraments, and for the government of the Church. In the monastic and cathedral schools, where nearly the whole body of the clergy was prepared for the ministry, the canons were taught with the other forms of knowledge needed for the government of souls. But in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, simultaneously with the systematic organization of theology, there grew up a fuller knowledge and a more scientific treatment of Church discipline. To the epoch-making *Decretum* of Gratian (A.D. 1150), were added, a century later, the five books of *Decretals*, under the official sanction of Pope Gregory IX., followed in due course by the collections of Boniface VIII., Clement V., and John XXII., which completed the mediæval code of the Ecclesiastical Laws. At the same time, new chairs sprung up in the universities, from which Canon Law was taught as a distinct science, sometimes by lay teachers as a complement of the civil law. Yet it must be remarked that it never detached itself completely from theology. In the "Summæ," or pastoral manuals, so common during the latter part of the Middle Ages, the duties of the Christian were expounded in their integrity, irrespective of their origin; and the canons of Church discipline were set forth with the same care as the prescriptions of the natural, or of the divine law. Theologians from S. Thomas to Suarez, and almost to our day, enter freely on the canonical side of whatever subjects they have to deal with, never seeming to think that they are going beyond their legitimate sphere. The same observation



holds good of the great canonists, or "Decretists," as they were originally called. Whenever they fall in with a theological question, in the pursuit of their canonical discussions, they take it up as a matter of course. Indeed, it is one of the most noticeable and most interesting features in the great teachers of the past, that they seem equally at home, whatever be the sphere of thought into which their subject leads them; be it philosophy, history, Biblical exegesis or Canon Law. In our day, and for some time back, the various fields of ecclesiastical knowledge have been marked off more distinctly. The tendency is to cultivate them separately; in fact, modern methods have made of specialty a condition of thoroughness in every department. But in our elementary teaching the mediæval tradition still prevails. Like the "Summæ" of old, our modern hand-books of moral theology are largely made up of Canon Law. Canon Law can claim two-thirds of the important treatises, *De Legibus* and *De Matrimonio*, a notable portion of the tracts, *De Virtute Religionis*, *De Sacramentis*, and *De Obligationibus Statuum*, while the tracts, *De Censuris*, *De Irregularitatibus*, *De Præceptis Ecclesiæ*, are nothing but Canon Law, from beginning to end.

In this shape, then, Canon Law never ceased to be taught in our theological schools, and in a measure fairly equal to the ordinary requirements of the ministry. Yet something more has been deemed necessary. Since the middle of the century, distinct courses of the science have been established in the seminaries of this, as well as of most European countries. So important a measure is due to a number of reasons, tendencies, and influences, the principal of which it may be interesting to mention, more especially as they help to explain the position and action of Canon Law at the present day in our midst.

## III.

1. First of all, it was remarked that the amount of Canon Law to be found in our manuals of moral theology, even if accounted sufficient for the use of pastors, confessedly falls short of what is needed by those who take any active part in the administration of a diocese. These, indeed, received in other times, and even now in other countries, a special training; yet, as a rule, to-day they are chosen from among the active workers of the ministry, who possess only the sort of knowledge commonly comprised in the preparatory studies of the seminary. It follows that these studies have to be widened in the direction of Canon Law, if they are expected to meet the requirements of a growing number of priests in each diocese.

2. Even the ordinary duties of the ministry occasionally place a priest in positions in which a more thorough knowledge of Canon Law is desirable. As chaplain, as confessor, he may, for example, have to take into account the duties and privileges of religious orders, or of their individual members, to apply in connection with them to the various Roman congregations. As pastor it is his duty to carry out the canonical rules regarding churches, private chapels, confraternities, cemeteries, hospitals, etc.

3. It is claimed that the very subjects bearing on Church discipline which our manuals of moral theology undertake to treat would be in better hands if left to canonists. The reason is that moral and canonical questions require a different treatment. Neither their principles nor their methods are the same, and their differences are liable to be overlooked when either canonists or moralists go outside their respective spheres. The same writer or teacher may, indeed, be familiar with both; but the student who has not

been trained to keep them separate is apt to confuse them, to the detriment of accuracy and consistency in his deductions. The only thorough remedy would consequently be to make each matter the object of a distinct treatment.

4. The recent development of canonical studies is a reaction against the general neglect into which they had fallen for many years in various parts of the Church, and which was caused, not so much by voluntary disregard, as by the force of unfavorable circumstances. The political revolutions of France and other European countries, on the one hand, had so completely upset the old order of things that many of the ordinary prescriptions of Canon Law ceased to be applicable; and in the work of restoration many more were lost sight of, or deliberately set aside to make room for others which seemed more suited to the altered circumstances. On the other hand, a considerable number of new churches were founded, and, in such beginnings, Canon Law in its integrity being out of the question, much had to be left to the judgment and discretion of individual bishops. Such was the condition of the Church in America during the most of the century; and such it remains, in many parts, down to the present day. As a consequence, the old rules were in many particulars ignored, or applied unevenly and intermittently; and bishops were guided by their own sense of the fitness of things.

Such a condition of ecclesiastical discipline could only be temporary. Action by rule is one of the fundamental needs of the Church. Arbitrary methods, however well meant, are distasteful to her, and tolerated only as a transient necessity. To none were these disadvantages more sensible than to the Roman authorities, to whom each day was wont to bring a fresh supply of questions and complaints, mostly arising from the fact that the rules and

the spirit of the Church discipline were lost sight of. The obvious remedy was to recall them on all occasions, and to lead back to a more careful study of them. Hence the solicitude of Pius IX., during the whole time of his lengthened pontificate, to enforce the observance of Canon Law wherever its prescriptions could be carried out, and to have it made part of the programme of studies in all Catholic seminaries.

At the same time he aimed thereby to secure another end, most desirable in itself, and to which at all times he attached the greatest importance; viz., the strengthening of the pontifical power, and, through it, of Catholic unity.

Catholic unity is sustained by many influences, and shows itself in diverse ways; but it consists essentially, as in all societies, in the submission of the members of the Church to the same authority. This authority is, as all know, of two kinds, doctrinal and disciplinary. Now, it is in the latter principally that the Church's authority makes itself felt. As guardian of the true faith she has comparatively seldom to interfere; as a governing power, on the contrary, her action is unceasing. In this latter capacity she has not only to enact new laws when necessary, but to interpret, to enforce, to modify by dispensation or by abrogation, numberless points in her discipline. To this is due chiefly that active intercourse which unites Rome, the seat of authority, with every part of Christendom, that perpetual flux and reflux of questions, replies, petitions, favors, directions, rules, and the like, which, like the life-blood coursing through the veins and arteries, diffuses renewed vitality through the whole system. The great misfortune of the Eastern churches was to have had a sort of independent legislature. They made their own laws, and administered them after their own fashion, appealing occasionally



from a lower to a higher local authority, but scarcely ever turning to Rome except for the righting of personal grievances. As a consequence, they hung on loosely to the centre of unity, and it became comparatively easy to detach them from it. This, too, was the evil and the danger of Gallicanism; it developed in the Latin Church a tendency to autonomy, to the detriment of hierarchal submission and vital unity. Had the movement not been stayed by the social upheaval of Europe at the close of the last century, it might have led to the formation of a schismatic Church like that of the Greeks. Now, for what remained of the old leaven in various countries of Europe, the most efficacious remedy was to be found in the full acceptance and application of Canon Law, with its visible centre in the Pope and the Roman tribunals, and its action extending to all the details of the Church's organization and life. Hence the policy of Pius IX., taken up and carried out by the bishops and priests most devoted to the Holy See, with the result of imparting to the whole Church a unity of action and spirit such as never perhaps was witnessed in the same degree at any previous period.

Lastly, while the general interests of the Church were thus leading Rome to encourage the study of Canon Law as a whole, some special questions of the science were becoming a subject of close examination and earnest discussion among certain members of the clergy. We refer to the laws which regulate the relations between bishops and the priests of their respective dioceses.

The mutual rights and duties of both had been defined clearly enough by the ancient canons, and courts accessible to all were ever open and ever ready to enforce them; but this, as we have already observed, corresponded only to the normal condition of the Church, with all her organs and

functions in full play. Where they had been broken up, or, as in newly founded communities, had never been established, the old rules were unavailable; and bishops, in their dealings with their priests as well as with their people, had to be guided, in many instances, by the requirements of each case, and by their own sense of justice. Their action, as a rule, was not questioned; but the nature of things forbade the rule to be without exception. To say nothing of those of the clergy who might be considered somewhat untractable and self-willed, the very best might occasionally feel aggrieved, and be led, on grounds of general no less than of personal interest, to seek redress. And as their only hope lay in the protection extended to them by the common law of the Church, they naturally turned to the study of it, and made its enactments the basis of their claims with bishops, or of appeal from their action to the authority of Rome. The Roman authorities, on their side, always dealt with such appeals on the principle that the common law had to be carried out so far as circumstances permitted, thus making it a necessity for the bishops to keep it steadily before their eyes, and conform to it whenever possible, unless where it had been superseded by the enactments of provincial or national synods sanctioned by the Holy See.

Thus it has come to pass that the long-neglected study of Canon Law finds itself again in the front rank, and is sure henceforth to hold its place in the elementary as well as in the higher spheres of ecclesiastical studies.

## ARTICLE II.

*THE HISTORICAL STUDY OF CANON LAW.*

A certain knowledge of Canon Law is, as we have seen, part of the natural equipment of a priest on entering the ministry. What he strictly needs to begin with may be limited enough; but as higher duties and graver responsibilities come upon him, he has to fit himself for them by a broader and more thorough comprehension of Church law, in some, at least, of its manifold developments. It is in this way that many of our busiest priests and bishops have been gradually and almost unconsciously led to devote a considerable amount of labor to mastering the main principles and applications of the science. At the same time others, even among those who look to nothing beyond the ordinary functions of the ministry, find a fuller knowledge of it as attractive as it is helpful in the performance of their daily duties. The number of students, lay as well as clerical, who devote themselves to its history is steadily increasing; while certain minds, more concerned about what is to be than about what has been, love to speculate on the shape which, in a more or less near future, Canon Law is likely to assume in presence of the deeply altered conditions of modern society.

Our purpose in the present article is to call attention to the interest as well as the benefit which a student may find in the historical study of Canon Law.

## I.

We may remark, first of all, that a historical knowledge of Canon Law is essential to the full intelligence of almost

every particular of Church legislation. The reason of this is obvious. Laws, in the Church, just as in every other society, are the joint result of previous practices and present conditions. In their substance, in their forms, in their details, they proceed at their origin from what has gone before and from what surrounds them. They may, indeed, be taken up and examined in themselves; their present force and meaning may be sufficiently ascertained for practical purposes without looking into their past. But if we would understand them thoroughly, if we would see the reason of their existence, of the particulars they embody, and of the shapes they have assumed, we have to go back to the period which gave them birth; we have to follow them in their various transformations through the course of ages.

The principle is fully recognized at the present day as applying to all legislation. Everywhere the history of the institutions and ordinances of a country is considered as an essential part of a thorough teaching of its laws; and in our Catholic universities the canonical department is considered complete only when it includes a chair of history.

Indeed, Church discipline has always been looked upon as one of the most important elements of Church history itself. The very life of the Church at every period is reflected in her legislation as vividly as in the most important events of her existence. Her enactments reveal her aims, her tendencies, the average moral and religious level of her children, the dangers which surround her, the special difficulties with which she has had to contend in each period. These old legislative records imbedded in our collections of Councils are invaluable to the historian of the Church. From seemingly insignificant details he gathers the most curious information, and out of incomplete and



scattered materials his constructive genius draws forth vivid pictures of the distant past. Even to the ordinary student, the *Corpus Juris Canonici* is a wonderful revelation of the Church's condition and life through the Middle Ages. Viewed in that light, its excerpts of Fathers and Councils, and its pontifical decretals, lose all their aridity, and become most attractive and delightful reading.

Nor is it of less interest for the learned jurist or for the student of social science. The former cannot fail to recognize that many of the legal maxims and rules of procedure which prevail in the law courts of modern nations were originally borrowed from the Church, just as the Church herself, in the gradual formation of her laws, freely borrowed from the imperial laws of Rome. As to the social sciences, it is clear that they cannot be studied in their antecedents without bringing the inquirer into contact with the laws which, more than aught else, shaped society in the Middle Ages, and prepared the way for modern civilization. Indeed, all mediæval history is in a great measure religious history. The action of the Church is felt everywhere; her laws penetrate and inform public and private life, supersede in many instances or qualify the action of secular authority, shape the course and character of events, and leave everywhere the unmistakable impress of her sovereign will. A familiar knowledge of these laws is consequently an essential requisite of the historian of the Middle Ages. Only through them can he understand and accurately interpret the facts.

This is so thoroughly understood at the present day, that Canon Law has come to be taught, not only in our theological schools, but in the secular departments of our great universities. In the celebrated *Ecole des Chartes* of Paris, for instance, side by side with paleography, numismatics,

and other subjects which prepare students for historical research, there is a regular course of Canon Law ; experience having shown that, short of the knowledge it conveys, students of mediæval history are unable to understand the true character of many facts they come across in the course of their researches. The lectures are given, and very ably, by a lay professor.

But outside all thought of historical investigation, a close study of Church discipline in its diverse consecutive forms offers to the learner many and great advantages. It places him, first of all, in direct contact with the mind of the Church, which in nothing expresses itself more fully than in her laws. As a discipline of the intellect, it is for the cleric what the study of civil law is for the secular, an influence ever broadening, tempering, and maturing his thoughts. From another point of view, Canon Law, properly understood, is a great school of patience, of moderation, of prudence, of measure. It shows how immovable firmness in essentials may be combined with admirable condescension in all else. In sustaining the divine law the Church is inflexible ; in enforcing her own enactments she is full of considerateness and compassion for human weakness. Wherever she goes, we find her tenderly accommodating her discipline to the degree of civilization she meets, commanding, or forbidding, or tolerating, just as circumstances, present and prospective, seem to require. The ordinances of such popes as Gregory the Great or St. Nicholas I. are admirable in that regard ; and all through the decretals of the mediæval popes we find the same gentle, reasonable, hopeful spirit, equally removed from weak indulgence and from undue rigor. To learn at such a school should be the ambition of all those who are called to share in the work of the Church, including even canonists them-

selves; some of whom, more erudite than judicious, are disposed to lift Church discipline almost above the natural and divine law, and make it into something rigid, unyielding, and ever so unlike that gentle, pliable, and, in the highest sense of the word, human rule, which it has ever been in the hands of the Church herself.

Yet, notwithstanding its many excellences, Canon Law, as compared with the general condition of the age, leaves room for many improvements; and it is to these, such as they may be anticipated, that we would now beg to call the attention of the reader.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *POSSIBLE REFORMS IN CANON LAW.*

The need of amending in various particulars the legislation of the Church has been widely felt for many years. The feeling was intensified by the convocation of the Vatican Council in 1869, the common hope and belief being that a readjustment of Church discipline, in view of modern requirements, would be one of the practical results of that great assembly. The Fathers of the Council shared in the general expectation. After the sudden and unexpected termination of their labors, one of them remarked to the present writer, "We were divided upon many questions; but a point upon which we were all in agreement was the necessity of recasting Canon Law." The records of the Council since published abundantly confirm this statement. The "postulata" to be submitted to the assembled Fathers on the subject already bore the signatures of a large number of their body; and there is little doubt but

that the desired result would have been reached if the Council had been permitted to continue its labors. Some of the suggestions made on that occasion have been carried out since by pontifical action, but the condition of things remains substantially as abnormal as before.

Thus, for example, the statutory law of matrimony is very different from the common practice. A number of impediments are maintained in theory, but set aside in reality, dispensations being had almost for the asking. Yet the same dispensations are surrounded by formalities, and made dependent on technical niceties which take away much of their practical value. The French and German bishops of the Vatican Council agreed in claiming considerable changes in all this—the suppression of such impediments as are no longer enforced, a simplification of the whole procedure of dispensations where still needed; and there is much reason to believe that this will be one of the first reforms effected in Canon Law.

Another, not less urgent, would bear on the matter of Ecclesiastical Censures. Needless to recall here the part they played for centuries in ecclesiastical government, or the many and not unmerited protests they gave rise to. Much was done by the Council of Trent<sup>1</sup> to check further abuses; but most of what was imbedded in the legislative acts of the Church remained, to the great perplexity of confessors and penitents, for a reservation of the sin to the Sovereign Pontiff or to the bishop ordinarily followed on each censure; and it was only by dint of pontifical indults, and bishops' extensions of faculties, together with canonists' ingenious devices to restrict the area of censures and enlarge the powers of confessors, that the latter could exercise in any sufficient way their ministry of reconciliation.

<sup>1</sup> Sess. xxv., c. 3. *De Reform.*



A partial remedy was applied on the eve of the Vatican Council by the Constitution *Apostolicæ Sedis*, limiting considerably the cases of excommunication *latæ sententiæ*; but if we may judge by the "postulata" prepared to be presented to the Fathers, the Council itself would have cut far deeper. Some of the "postulators" represent that almost all the penalties in these cases of reservation resolving themselves practically into a correspondence with Rome, the burden which was meant for the sinner had in reality to be borne by the confessor. Bishops have to be armed with special powers from Rome to deal with the cases of more frequent occurrence; several, besides, of those mentioned in the Pontifical Constitution are far from being clear, and of such as are, more than one is of doubtful application in various parts of the Church.

The organization and working of the *Index* were also the object of earnest remonstrance. The paragraph devoted to the subject by the German bishops deserves to be recalled. "*Petimus ut regulæ Indicis quæ partim in regionibus mixtis nunquam omnino observari poterant, partim vero ob omnino immutatum societatis humanæ, et in specie rei litterariæ, statum, in præsentibus nusquam fere observari possunt, ideoque multas conscientiarum anxietates et confessoriorum dubia provocant, recenti revisioni submittantur. Petimus quoque ut novorum librorum censura non promulgetur nisi prius audito auctoris Ordinario, quia haud raro evenit ut absque censuræ publicatione erroris revocatio effici valeat, si auctor sit bonæ voluntatis.*" The French bishops also recommend a complete remodeling of the institution in keeping with the requirements of modern times, and suggest in particular that no Catholic writer in good standing should be condemned without being heard.

But, furthermore, they formulate the wish that the whole

ecclesiastical legislation should be adapted to the altered condition of things, the Council determining the lines upon which the work should be carried out, and entrusting the working out of details to a special commission composed of able canonists.<sup>1</sup>

Similar petitions emanated from numerous groups of German, Canadian, Italian, and other bishops.

Two things principally are insisted upon: First, the formal abrogation of all laws which might be considered as having fallen into desuetude or having ceased to be useful; and secondly, the codification of those which would still remain in vigor,—in a word, something similar to what had been done for the imperial legislation of Rome by Justinian and his lawyers in giving to the world the invaluable *Corpus Juris Civilis*.

There was nothing assuredly impossible in such a task; yet the difficulties which it offered, and still continues to offer, are, it must be confessed, much greater than is commonly supposed. Canon Law, once we go beyond the rudiments, is no longer that clear, definite science it appears in its elements. It is composed of innumerable laws, constitutions, decisions, responses, which have ema-

<sup>1</sup> The considerations upon which they base their claim will be read with interest. "*Evidentissimum est, ab omnibus jam diu agnitum, et ubique conclamatum juris canonici aliquam revisionem et reformationem necessariam esse valdeque urgendam. Siquidem ob tam multiplices gravesque rerum et societatis humanæ mutationes, leges permultæ, quædam inutiles, aliæ observatu impossibiles aut difficillimæ evaserunt. De innumeris quoque canonibus ambigitur utrum hactenus vigeant necne. Demum per tot sæculorum decursum ita excrevit legum ecclesiasticarum numerus, et leges illæ in ingentibus juris collectionibus adeo cumulatae sunt, ut aliquo sensu dicere possemus: obruimur legibus. Hinc fit ut studium Juris canonici infinitis prope et inextricabilibus difficultatibus implicetur, controversiis ac processibus latissimus locus pateat, et conscientiæ mille anxietatibus angantur et in contemptum legum impellantur.*"

nated from popes, pontifical courts, and councils, year after year, and have gone on accumulating for centuries. There are the various collections which compose the *Corpus Juris*; the subsequent pontifical acts, which fill more than thirty folio volumes; the disciplinary decrees of the Council of Trent, extending to every branch of Church legislation; there are the "acts" of the Roman Congregations. Comparatively little of all this has been formally abrogated; but much of what is earlier has been equivalently superseded by subsequent legislation, much also has fallen into desuetude, local or general. Canonists, it is true, have taken great pains to determine what portion of it remains in vigor, and, indeed, it is only through their labors that we can form any kind of practical estimate in the matter; but how much still remains regarding which they are uncertain or divided, besides their having no official power, such as the old Roman jurists had, to settle doubtful points by their own authority. Hence the appeal to the authority of the Council. But just at that time the Council would have found it difficult to reach the unanimity desirable in matters where the legislators have also to be the executors of the law. Some of the reforms proposed, however desirable in themselves, would have been considered as reflecting critically on the methods of Rome, and as showing an unfriendly spirit toward the Holy See. The Pope alone could have undertaken the task with the assurance of success; but in all probability his most ardent supporters would have dissuaded him from it, or recommended him to defer his action until after the close of the Council. As a fact, some of the reforms suggested have been made since; but in substance Church law still remains open to all the objections raised at the time of the Council, and continues to offer the same

difficulties to a thorough reformation. It is easy to say, "Cancel the laws that have ceased to be observed;" but it is not easy to point them out, there being few that are not practiced somewhere. Besides, if really profitable to the community, instead of being canceled, they should be recalled and enforced.

Here we are brought to the second rule, that of real usefulness. "Drop, it is said, the laws which have ceased to be useful, or which do more harm than good." Nobody can question the abstract wisdom of such a rule, and there are plenty of obvious applications of it. But to carry it right through the whole body of the Canon Law would be an operation equally difficult and perilous.

Some conception of the difficulties to be anticipated in the attempt may be gathered from what has happened within the last generation or two in England. English law is, and has been for centuries, in a very unsatisfactory condition. It consists of the common or unwritten law, to be gathered only from the traditions of law courts and rulings of judges, and of the statute laws made, as occasion required, by act of Parliament, but without any authoritative coördination or harmony. "All ages of English history," says Stuart Mill, "have given one another rendezvous in English law; their several products may be seen all together, not interfused, but heaped one upon another, as many different ages of the earth may be read in some perpendicular section of its surface." Hence, as in our Canon Law, much uncertainty, owing to the obscurity, indefiniteness, and conflict of the authorities from which a knowledge of the law is to be derived, a great amount of time and labor consumed both by judges and practitioners, and much inconvenience to individuals from their having no assurance of the extent of their duties or



of their rights. The need of applying a remedy has been keenly felt all through the present century, yet extremely little has been done. Some of the wisest consider the project of codifying the whole law as too adventurous a task for mortal man to grapple with. For them the only practical method would be to proceed by sections, and thus, in the course of years, give a series of codes covering the whole ground of legislation. Others demand at once a written republication of the whole mass of existing law, common or statutory, to supersede everything else; whilst many would go farther still, and attempt to rid all preceding legal enactments of unnecessary technicalities, and set them forth in clear language and in logical order—something like what was done in France at the beginning of the century. But each plan is surrounded by so many difficulties that no agreement has been reached hitherto as to what might be attempted. The case is in many respects the same in regard to Canon Law. Yet the impossibility of doing anything entirely satisfactory should not prevent partial and even deep reforms, such as we meet more than once in the past. Thus the collections of Gregory IX. and Boniface VIII. were a great advance on what preceded. The decrees of Trent happily superseded and supplemented what was unsatisfactory or insufficient in the laws of the period. Another ecumenical council would in all probability undertake the task, or even a great canonist raised to the pontifical throne, like Benedict XIV.

But organization and reformation are not the only needs of Canon Law. It has also to adapt itself by measures entirely new to the altered condition of things. In its normal condition legislation follows the law of living things, ever dropping its wasted elements, while it gathers in others suited to sustain its life. Hence the necessity, in Church

as in state, of a permanent action of the legislative power. In what direction and on what plan that power is most likely to act in the future must depend on the internal condition of the Church, and on the nature of her relations with the secular powers, neither of which can be foreseen, except in the most imperfect way. Much of the ancient legislation, including that of the Council of Trent, was framed on the supposition of the union of Church and state, a condition of things which has disappeared from many countries, in several others never existed, and, if we may judge from the trend of recent events, is likely to be still more widely superseded by a *régime* of separation, friendly or otherwise. As a consequence, the new legislation of the Church has had for some time already, and will have still more in the future, to fashion itself to this new state of things, and depend on the spiritual authority alone for its execution; the only duty of the state being, in its present conditions, to protect the secular interests of the members of religious associations when based on their organic laws, such laws being looked upon as a quasi contract by which they have freely bound themselves to each other.

When we refer to the need of new laws, we have in view principally such as would have to be substituted in place of those it would be advisable to abrogate. If much more were needed, assuredly the present time would be by no means unfavorable to their enactment; for never was the organic unity of the Church more fully realized, never was the authority of the Holy See more fully admitted in theory or more readily accepted in practice. But in reality, so far as we know, no such need is widely felt. There is little disposition anywhere to add to the laws of the Church. Whatever necessities there are seem to be more of a local than of a general kind, and consequently to be provided for by local authority.

For local legislation is a normal function of the Church's life, just as much as that of popes or general councils. In the early Christian centuries most of the legislative work was done, not by popes or ecumenical councils, but by provincial and national synods. These latter ceased in a great measure in the later middle and modern ages, through accidental causes upon which we have not time to dwell. But there is always room and work for them; and now that the dangers which attended them have disappeared, it is not unlikely that they will once more flourish. Their laws will come nearer to the real needs of the priests and people for whom they are made than laws meant for the whole Catholic world. From the very nature of the case the latter will always have to be limited, so great are the differences between the different parts of the Church. This unequal fitness of general laws for the varying condition of places is in some measure provided for by pontifical indults extending the powers of bishops; but there is something abnormal in the fact of the immense majority of bishops requiring special faculties to provide for the daily needs of their people.

This leads us to inquire further as to the probable maintenance or change of the present administrative relations between Rome and the rest of the Catholic Church.

We may remark in reply that these relations differ and have always differed considerably in closeness and in frequency, according to the traditions of each ecclesiastical province, its distance from the centre, and other individual circumstances. But, with the growing facility of communications, the principal cause of these differences is fast disappearing. America is, in a way, nearer to Rome to-day than England was a hundred years ago. In this respect the present condition of things lends itself to greater

centralization; and centralization, we know, is the common tendency of those who wield power, not only if they be proud, arbitrary, or selfish, but even when they are animated with the purest intentions. It is, indeed, the ordinary temptation of those most anxious for the general good to set aside less enlightened action and take things into their own hands. But there is such a thing for the very ablest and best as having their hands too full; and Rome, like our law courts and our national legislature, feels that it has reached that condition. The effect of it is felt all over the Church, in the slowness with which business, often urgent, is transacted in Rome; and hence a growing desire on the one side and a greater willingness on the other that their relations should be limited to more important or more difficult matters, and that those of lesser weight or more frequent occurrence should devolve on authorities nearer home, better able to appreciate their particular features and expedite them without delay. The additional powers given to bishops in the shape of pontifical indults are a move in this direction. A still greater one for the American Church is to be seen in the permanent establishment of the Apostolic Delegation. With this institution a new era has begun for the ecclesiastical administration of the whole country. In what direction it will move henceforth must depend upon many things; but this much may be surely anticipated that, while enlightened and guided by a closer knowledge of the circumstances and merits of each individual case, the newly established authority will always act in accordance with the traditional, unvarying principles of Church discipline, and that in America, as in Rome, it will be accessible only along the established lines of Canon Law.



## CHAPTER IX.

*LITURGY.*

THE professional knowledge of the Catholic priest is chiefly theological, but not exclusively so. Side by side with it stands another science not less sacred in its object, and, if anything, still more closely connected with the priesthood than theology itself: it is the science of Liturgy.

Liturgy has for its object to regulate the externals of religion, as theology regulates belief and conduct. In its essence, it is true, religion resides in the soul and belongs to the world of things unseen. "God is a spirit," says our Lord, "and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth."<sup>1</sup> The silent homage of the heart in reverence and in love is the true religious worship. But, like all human feelings, it tends to manifest itself by visible signs; and, as a fact, the worship paid by men to God is, and always has been, outward as well as inward, the outward form serving, not only to express, but also to awaken and to intensify, the feelings of the heart.

And, just as men's feelings regarding other objects, when deep and shared by many, ordinarily seek and find a common mode of expression in which they publicly unite, so do we notice that the religious emotions of the human race have always found their expression in some public form of worship carried out in conformity with certain established rules. These rules, slowly elaborated with the divine wor-

<sup>1</sup> S. John iv. 24.

ship in the Catholic Church, and reduced to a system harmonious in all its parts, constitute the science of Liturgy.

## I.

Liturgy is preëminently, — we might almost say exclusively, — a sacerdotal science. It was the only form of knowledge the priests of pagan Greece and Rome were expected to possess. They taught no religious doctrines; the moral guidance of their fellow-men was no part of their calling; their sole business was to carry out the established forms of the national cult. Nor was it much otherwise in the Jewish priesthood; for although the sons of Levi, because of their consecration to God and their familiarity with the rites of the temple, must have always enjoyed a certain authority in moral as well as in religious matters among their brethren, yet they do not seem to have received any formal, abiding mission as teachers and as guides. Their chief duty was to know thoroughly the elaborate prescriptions of the ritual law, to carry them out with accuracy, and, doubtless also, to watch their observance as they extended to and fashioned numberless details of the Hebrew daily life.

In the new law the sacerdotal action became much broader, being primarily that of teachers and guides. “Go ye and teach.” But it extends, as S. Paul says, “to all things that appertain to God;” and, in fact, the sacerdotal character is more closely wedded to the sacrificial functions of the priest, and consequently to his liturgical duties, than to any other. It follows that, while needing knowledge of all kinds, there is a certain measure of liturgical knowledge which the priest can least of all dispense with. Indeed, the whole action of the Church teaches him the importance

which he should attach to the correct observance, and as a consequence, to the knowledge, of her ritual. From the fullness with which God Himself vouchsafed to establish all the particulars of the cult to be offered to Him by His chosen people, and the rigor with which He punished any deliberate departure from it, she learned from the beginning with what thoughtful and reverent care she had to order the forms of her own higher and purer worship; and no lesson has she taken more to heart. After the purity of the faith and morals of her children, it may be said that in no other matter has she shown more earnest and constant concern than in what regards her religious rites. Every particular of the elaborate ceremonial which spreads itself out all the year round before the admiring gaze of the faithful is her own work, inspired by her devotion, gradually unfolded by her wisdom, sanctioned and sustained by her sacred authority. Neither in public prayer nor in the administration of the sacraments is any room left for individual tastes or preferences. Each detail is accurately prescribed, each difficulty foreseen. At the altar especially, in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, the priest is surrounded by directions on all sides, and guided in every particular. Each movement of the body, of the head, of the hands, of the eyes, has its law. In an action so unspeakably solemn and sacred no room is left for what, if dependent on the judgment of each one, might easily become undignified and irreverent. The religious sense of a priest invariably shows itself in his close adherence to the prescribed rules. It is only the heretical spirit that has openly rebelled against them. Protestantism, as we know, was a revolt against the whole organization and outward life of the Church. Her sacramental rites were almost entirely thrust aside, with their underlying doctrines, by the first

so-called reformers; and, in what they retained of them, the instructive and beautiful ceremonial of Christian ages gave way to a cold and lifeless ritual. It was in opposition to this that the Council of Trent formulated the 13th Canon of its 7th Session. "*Si quis dixerit receptos et approbatos Ecclesiæ Catholicæ ritus in solemnī Sacramento-rum administratione adhiberi consuetos, aut contemni, aut sine peccato a ministris pro libitu omitti, aut in novos alios per quemcumque Ecclesiarum pastorem mutari posse, anathema sit.*"

In view of securing still more effectively the unity and dignity of the Catholic ceremonial, Sixtus V. soon after established the celebrated Congregation of Rites, to take cognizance of and solve the various difficulties constantly arising as to the true meaning of the established rules, and their proper adaptation to the varying conditions of persons, times, and places. Nothing has contributed so much to sustain the harmony and beauty of Catholic worship during the last three hundred years as the unceasing labor of this Congregation. At the same time nothing could exhibit more forcibly the watchful interest of the Church in all that concerns the externals of religion; nothing could show better her earnest desire, nay, her formal will, that her ceremonial shall be maintained in its integrity.

It is in conformity with this spirit that the saints have at all times exhibited so special a reverence for the established rites. S. Teresa was wont to say that she would lay down her life for the maintenance of a single rubric. S. Charles was known to wait for hours rather than dispense with something seemingly unimportant, but prescribed by the pontifical. Indeed, it is the natural instinct of all those who approach God with any real sense of their utter dependence on Him to conform as closely as possible



to the order and manner of address which He is known to sanction. Rubrics are the etiquette of religion; and as those admitted to the presence of their sovereign dare not depart from the established ceremonial of court life, so those who enter into the august presence of the Divinity by religious homage feel it their first duty to conform to the rules by which such intercourse is regulated. The wisest among the pagans understood this. Of the great Roman general, Paulus Æmilius, Plutarch relates that, having been promoted to the sacred dignity of augur, he studied with extreme diligence the ancient religious rites of the Republic, and was scrupulously careful to avoid any addition, omission, or change in them. In answer to those who deemed him too particular in regard to the smaller ceremonies, he was wont to say that he owed this exactness not only to the gods, as a mark of reverence, but also to the state, since any departure from an order established by law or by custom could not but ultimately prove detrimental to the general good.

If, then, the laws of public worship are of such importance, and if their observance principally concerns the clergy, it manifestly follows that a knowledge of them, varying in degree according to individual circumstances, is a necessary requisite in every priest.

But what concerns us most is to show of what kind that knowledge has to be, and in what manner it may best be secured.

## II.

The science of Liturgy, like that of any other code of laws, presents two aspects; the one practical, the other speculative. As a practical or positive science, Liturgy lays down general rules, and directs the application of

them to cases of special complexity or difficulty. In its speculative aspect it undertakes to give the manifold reasons of all that is prescribed and practiced.

A priest needs to know something of both.

1. The practical side is what he requires most, inasmuch as it is the very law of his action. There are principles and rules of daily application with which, of course, he must be familiar. At the close of his ordination, the consecrating bishop warns every young priest "to study diligently the whole order of the Mass, and to learn it from experienced priests before attempting to celebrate." The direction evidently holds good, not only for the Holy Sacrifice, but for the administration of the sacraments, the recitation of the breviary, and for whatever else may form part of his ordinary duties. What he is officially called to do, he is bound to do correctly.

Besides what comes into daily use, there are ceremonies which a priest has to perform occasionally, sometimes without previous notice, and for which he has to hold himself ready. There are those which come round at stated intervals, to be performed alone or with others; there are episcopal functions in which he may be called to take his part. For all these he has duly to fit himself.

Finally, there are more solemn and striking celebrations, performed only by those higher in dignity, and in which it can hardly be said that the ordinary priest has a share, such as ordinations, the consecration of churches, etc., but which are witnessed by the faithful, referred to in books, and written of in newspapers. Regarding all such ceremonies, every priest is an authority to whom any one may turn for correct information. It is only proper that he should be prepared to give it, or to know at least where it may be found.

2. But what men most seek for in regard to ecclesiastical rites, unusual or common, is their reason or meaning. True, the ceremonies of the Catholic Church possess a majesty and beauty which captivate the beholder, even when he fails to understand them. In Christian souls they awake most powerfully the sense of the divine, and often awe into silent reverence the thoughtless and unbelieving. Yet in many things they seem strange, even to the most devout, and all of them contain hidden treasures of instruction and edification by which priests and people may be equally benefited. To the words, the actions, the objects which enter into Catholic worship, there attaches a variety of senses, doctrinal, historical, or mystical, understood only by those to whom they have been explained, or who have made them the object of careful personal study.

The doctrines of the Church, to begin with, are imbedded in her Liturgy. There is not an article of her faith that does not find a clear, striking, and varied expression, not only in the creeds, which form part of the Liturgy, but in the prayers, the prefaces, the hymns, the antiphons which are said or sung in her public celebrations. And what the words express, the ceremonial actions illustrate and emphasize. The priest at the altar proclaims by his attitude and his every movement the greatness and holiness of the mysteries he celebrates. Each ceremony in the rite of baptism, each object employed, the cleansing water, the burning light, the white garment, the sacred unction, the mystic salt, all tell of the wonderful change that is being invisibly yet really effected.

And, then, each prayer, each ceremony, has its history. "Language," it has been happily said, "is fossil poetry." Liturgy, with no less truth, may be called fossil history. Its formulas, its rites, its elaborate rules and prescriptions,

its numerous solemnities and celebrations, have all had their origin and growth, and occasional fluctuations and changes. All together they recall the most interesting periods and features of past Christian ages. Every part of the Mass, almost every one of the ceremonies we daily witness in its celebration, the sacramental rites, the various benedictions, all are relics of bygone times, revealing them to us, while being at the same time fully intelligible only through their history.

And, finally, there is the symbolic, mystical meaning which pervades the whole ritual of the Church, and by which alone many of its features can be properly understood. The sacred vestments worn by priests at the altar, with their different colors and forms; the special insignia of the bishop; the altar itself, with its necessary requisites and its varying appendages; the whole church, in fact, its general form and salient features, its towers and bells, its recesses and shrines, its furniture and decorations, the lights, the incense, — all are fraught with mystic meaning. They represent and recall the greatest facts and truths of religion; they give expression to what is most fundamental and deepest in the Christian life.

But it is only for those who have been taught their import, and, hence, the duty of priests in charge of souls to instruct their people in all these particulars. That this is the mind of the Church herself is apparent from C. VIII., Sess. XXII. of the Council of Trent, prescribing that something of what is witnessed at the altar should be frequently explained to the faithful. We may add that no form of instruction is more eagerly sought for. With advancing civilization there is a growing need among Catholics of every condition to know the meaning of all they see, and the reason of what they are made to practice. Such explan-



ations may be given in consecutive form or incidentally, as the occasion offers; but, in whatever shape they come, they are always welcomed. The faithful never tire listening to the explanation, if only intelligently given, of what they witness and share in every day. They rejoice in it, not only on their own account, but also because they are placed thereby in a position to repel the difficulties or to answer the inquiries of non-Catholics and unbelievers. Most of all, the priest himself is benefited by such knowledge. It awakens his attention to what in the rites he performs would otherwise pass unnoticed; it strengthens his faith; it deepens his reverence; it makes him share more abundantly the devotion of past ages, and breathe more fully the spirit of the Church.

It now remains for us to see how such valuable knowledge may be reached, entertained, and even expanded, in the ordinary conditions of the priesthood.

### III.

The essentials of Liturgy have always been part of the practical training of aspirants in our seminaries. With each succeeding order opportunities come of themselves to exercise its functions in the sanctuary; and when the end of the preparation is near, the rubrics and ceremonies of the Mass are carefully taught, as also the manner of administering the sacraments, with the other more usual ceremonies. Besides this, almost everywhere a regular course of Liturgy has become in these latter times an integrant element of seminary studies. The programme varies considerably, some teachers embracing the whole subject, others confining themselves to a single section, or selecting what is most important in each; some dwelling chiefly on the

positive or practical aspects of the science, whilst others devote themselves principally to the historical, the æsthetic, or the devotional points of view. In this way young priests go forth nowadays possessing, not only a competent knowledge of what is most usual, but views and principles bearing on the whole science, and preparing them for future studies.

These subsequent studies may be of two kinds.

1. A revision of the elementary principles and rules; for, unless frequently recalled, they are sure to be lost sight of or altered in some particulars. Few priests, for instance, are likely to observe the rubrics of the Mass in their integrity unless they have gone over them repeatedly in one shape or another, especially in the early days of their ministry. The "*Rubricæ generales*" which occupy the first pages of every missal are sufficient for the purpose. But a special manual, such as the Baltimore "Cereemonial," would be found much more interesting and more complete, offering directions not only for Low Mass, but for the solemn celebration of the Holy Mysteries, and for the due keeping of festivals through the year.

2. In connection with all this, as with the divine office, the administration of the sacraments, benedictions, processions, and the like, endless questions arise, some easily solved by those who have mastered the general principles, others intricate and perplexing, which have long exercised the wits of rubricists, or elicited decisions from the Congregation of Rites. Only specialists can be expected to dispose of such questions off-hand; yet any ordinary priest may have to deal with them in the course of his duty. To meet this need works have been written in which the great majority of such questions are examined and settled; and no priest should be without owning or having within reach

one of these books. A great many have been published. The most popular and the most useful in this country are: O'Kane, *Notes on the Rubrics*; De Herdt, *Sacræ Liturgiæ Praxis*, also his *Praxis Pontificalis*; Wapelhorst, *Compendium Sacræ Liturgiæ*; Bishop Gabriels, *Quæstiones in Rubricas Missalis et Breviarii*. Many more of the same kind may be found in French, such as the manuals of Bernard, Lerosey, Levavasseur, etc.

3. The speculative study of Liturgy offers a still wider field and a richer literature. Those who wish to confine themselves to what is most accessible will find most helpful such books as: *The History of the Mass*, by Father O'Brien, the *De Sacrificio Missæ*, of Benedict XIV.; and, as covering the whole ground, and most suggestive in its views and its references, the Hungarian liturgist, Kosma de Papi's book, *Liturgica Sacra Catholica*. Nothing more would be needed to enable a busy priest to give a series of most useful and interesting talks on the rites of the Church to the faithful at large, or to special gatherings of Sunday-school teachers or sodalities. But if he would make his instructions still more valuable and more attractive, let him take up Martène, *De Antiquis Ecclesiæ Ritibus*; or Cardinal Bona, *Rerum Liturgicarum Libri Duo*; or one who has largely availed himself of both, Catalani, in his excellent *Commentaries on the Ritual* and on the *Cæremoniale Episcoporum*. In French, Lebrun has been for the last two hundred years a standard authority on the historical side of the Mass. Dom Chardon in his *Histoire des Sacremens*, reprinted in Migne's *Cursus Completus Theologiæ*, gives a most interesting account of the manner in which the sacraments were administered in the past, and especially in the early ages of the Church. In our own time Dom Guéranger, Abbot of Solesmes, has given a great impulse to liturgical studies

by his *Institutions Liturgiques* ; while his *Année Liturgique*, which we have in English, has placed the offices and solemnities of the Church all the year round within the reach of the pious laity.

Finally, several works have been published recently on the breviary which cannot fail to be of special interest to priests and clerics in Holy Orders. Among others we may mention *Le Saint Office*, by Abbé Bacuez, and *Histoire du Bréviaire*, by Abbé Batifol, both translated into English.

To conclude: the whole spirit of the Church on the general subject finds a fitting and adequate expression in the fifth chapter of Sess. XXII. of the Council of Trent. “*Quum natura hominum ea sit, ut non facile queat sine adminiculis exterioribus ad rerum divinarum meditationem sustolli, propterea pia mater Ecclesia quosdam ritus instituit, ut mysticas benedictiones, lumina, thymiamata, vestes atque id genus multa quo et majestas sacrificii commendaretur et mentes fidelium per hæc visibilia religionis et pietatis signa ad rerum altissimarum . . . contemplationem excitarentur.*”



## CHAPTER X.

## HOMILETICS.

PREACHING, as we all know, is one of the most ordinary, and at the same time one of the most important, duties of the Catholic priest. His mission is primarily that of a teacher, *Euntes docete!* and, under the name of teaching, S. Paul, in his directions to Timothy, comprises all the forms of appeal which may be addressed to the feelings as well as to the minds of men: "Preach the word: be instant, in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."<sup>1</sup> And, indeed, it is in all these ways that a priest has unceasingly to appeal to his people,—not only from the pulpit, but in the confessional, in the Sunday-school, by the sick bed, in nuptial and funeral ceremonies, in the familiar intercourse of daily life. Everywhere he is, actually or potentially, the bearer of a divine message. But he is principally so when he addresses the assembled faithful upon the vital interests of their eternal welfare. Then, indeed, may he say in all truth with S. Paul,<sup>2</sup> "For Christ we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us." He is the envoy of God; he speaks the word of God, in the name of God. His purpose is the gravest, the most important and solemn, that can be conceived of, the very purpose of all creation,—the glory of God and the eternal salvation of souls.

But, although his power to promote these paramount

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

interests is, in itself, unlimited, in reality it has for its measure his fitness for the duty. The sacraments of which he is the minister have an efficacy of their own, independent of his personal qualities; but it is otherwise with his work as a preacher. There, in the language of the schools, the fruit comes *ex opere operantis*, in proportion to the effort of the workman and the value of his work. Hence the necessity of a serious preparation.

By none, it must be said, is the need of a preparation more keenly felt than by aspirants to the priesthood in this country. All around them they notice how much the influence and usefulness of a priest are dependent on his qualities as a preacher, and, in the wider field of social life, how high the orator stands among his fellow-men. They realize the fact that if, in our day, the pen is a tremendous power, that of the living voice is greater still, not only upon those whose ear it reaches and who are subdued by its charm, but on the public at large; for whatever falls from eloquent lips is caught up at once, reëchoed by the thousand voices of the press, and carried instantaneously through the length and breadth of the land.

It is only natural, therefore, that, as they look into the future, the prospect of their work as preachers should occupy a considerable share of their thoughts, and, at the same time, stir up and sustain their best energies. What they need, then, is not to be excited, but to be guided, and this will be our chief purpose in the following remarks.

## ARTICLE I.

*PREPARATION.*

Like all that fits a man for the abiding work of a lifetime, the preparation of a preacher should begin early, and never entirely cease. Yet it may be said that it belongs in an especial manner to the period of seminary life, and to the early years of the priesthood. In the present paper we will confine ourselves to the consideration of what has to be done in the first stage of preparation.

When the young aspirant enters a seminary, much of what will one day make him an efficient preacher is already done. He is educated. His mind has been strengthened by the discipline of accurate, systematic teaching, sharpened by discussions, broadened by varied forms of knowledge. His imagination and his taste have been refined by contact with the most beautiful conceptions of ancient and modern literature. His early lessons of elocution have divested him of the stiffness and awkwardness of the beginner. He has learned to speak, to write, to order his thoughts. In a word, the foundations are laid and the structure begun; it only remains, while completing, to accommodate it to the particular end one has in view.

This implies special work in the threefold direction of knowledge, literary power, and delivery. In other words, to preach a sermon in a fitting manner, the preacher has, first, to be sufficiently acquainted with his subject; next, he has to accommodate it to his hearers; thirdly, he has to speak the discourse thus prepared in a way to awaken their attention and sustain their interest. What still remains to be acquired under each of these aspects constitutes the object of his proximate preparation.

## I.

*First.*—As regards the knowledge to be acquired by the future preacher, much has been already said in the foregoing papers. The study of theology in all its forms is, in a large measure, meant as a preparation for the pulpit. Theology is the very source from which religious instruction flows. Its dogmatic teachings supply the matter of doctrinal sermons, its moral principles are at the root of all practical advice and exhortation, while the counsels of Christian perfection are all embodied and systematized in ascetic theology. Not only by the definiteness and accuracy of its statements does theology prove helpful to the preacher, but by its developments, by its proofs, by its deductions, its philosophy, its history. They all have their legitimate place in the sermon; the mind of the average hearer demands them, now one, now another, and generally welcomes them all, provided they be accommodated to his capacity and culture. Once more, the sermon in itself is nothing but theology, dogmatic, ascetic, or moral; the difference is only in the presentation.

It follows that, in his theological studies, the future preacher has to keep steadily in view the two aspects of the science; the one speculative and systematic, the other practical and popular. Neither can be neglected with impunity.

First of all, to confine himself to what is directly serviceable in the instruction of the faithful would be to miss what gives its chief beauty, majesty, and power to the science of theology. Its scientific character would disappear, and with it the strength and efficacy of the sermon itself. As we observed elsewhere, a teacher has always to possess much more knowledge than he imparts. He has



to adapt his teachings to the ever varying requirements of his hearers, and is thus compelled, almost at every step, to go below the surface and beyond the traditional form. If his knowledge is confined to the latter, or is but one-sided or half-realized, his manner of conveying it will be stiff, or obscure, or inaccurate. He will dread to expand the words of his text; and if he ventures beyond, it will be only to talk at random, or to wander about in a hesitating, helpless way. The preacher needs at every moment to rest his foot on solid ground. Even in his exhortations he appeals chiefly to theological motives, as they are seen in the light of faith, heaven, hell, the claims of God, the ways of His providence, His infinite mercy, etc. In short, there is no freedom of presentation in the preacher, no depth of doctrine, no true facility and felicity even of expression, if he has not begun by getting a solid, scientific, all-round conception of his subject. The greatest theologians were not assuredly the most eloquent preachers; but no preacher has won abiding fame who, to his oratorical gifts, did not add a deep and accurate knowledge of theology.

A preacher, therefore, has to be, first of all, a theologian. But to know theology as it is taught in the schools is only part of the work. While studied scientifically and, as it were, for its own sake, it has also to be studied practically and in view of being imparted to others. The student must learn as one who is to teach; he must ever keep before his mind the people he will have one day to enlighten. For, in the doctrines upon which he is engaged, there are many things unsuited to them; depths which his trained eye rejoices to fathom, but which to the uninitiated are impenetrable darkness. Almost at every step he notices relations and consequences useful only to himself, nice distinctions

which would only puzzle and perplex his hearers. All these he has to set aside for his own uses, or keep in the background.

On the other hand, there are in these same doctrines, in their developments, their proofs, their applications, certain aspects accessible to the ordinary mind, and at the same time more attractive, more striking. There are analogies, points of contact with the facts of nature or of human experience, which make them more intelligible and more enjoyable. And, reciprocally, there are, as it were, parts of the soul upon which these truths may be more easily engrafted ; certain accepted principles with which they are closely allied, certain feelings which they naturally awaken or by which they are welcomed, thus giving them a readier admission and a more abiding hold. All such things the future preacher must note as he goes along, and contrive to remember, being careful, at the same time, that this second point of view shall not overshadow the first, and that the brightness and charm of any conception shall never be considered as a substitute for its necessary truth and solidity.

Such, in brief, are the two aspects of divine doctrine which the student has to keep steadily in view. Without the first, his thought will be weak and faltering ; without the second, it will be stiff, unattractive, offering his hearers nothing but undigested theological knowledge, — the abstract definitions, the dry arguments, and the bewildering distinctions of his text-book, — a scholastic thesis, but not a sermon.

## II.

*Second.* — This brings us to the second requisite of successful preaching : the power of presenting the subject in an effective way ; or, as S. Augustine puts it after the rhet-

oricians of old, the gift of enlightening, of charming, and of moving the hearers, *ut doceat, ut placeat, ut moveat*. But that is the very object of rhetoric itself which our aspirant is supposed to have studied; why then revert to it here?

For two reasons.

The first is that, while rhetoric in its elementary principles is accessible to all, and is doubtless not unknown to our candidate, in its perfection it is fully mastered only by the consummate orator. Of course, we speak of rhetoric, not as a collection of rules, but as the faculty of applying them, and as imparting literary power. Thus understood, it is clear that the student has still almost everything to learn. He knows, indeed, that eloquence rests on sympathy; that a man can move the will of his fellow-men only in so far as he brings their thoughts and their feelings to vibrate in unison with his own. But this in turn implies a familiar knowledge of the complex mechanism of the human soul in all its various departments. To awaken with effect its intuitions, its emotions, or its memories, the speaker must possess the same unerring instinct as that which guides the trained artist when he runs his fingers over the keyboard of an instrument, and elicits from it a flow of harmony. But, just as the command of the instrument has been won by the musician, however naturally gifted, only by close study and incessant exercise, so the power of speech necessarily demands, and has invariably demanded, in the most successful, unceasing thought and sustained effort.

Not only must the future preacher note, as we have said, day after day, in his theological studies, those truths or aspects of truths which are best suited to the lay mind; but he has to keep looking round in every direction, in order to gather in all that can help to give a clearer conception

of these same doctrines, or to impress them more deeply on his hearers. Comparisons, analogies, illustrations, of all kinds and from every available source; images borrowed from history, from science, from nature, from art, — all the elements of expression and beauty which he meets have to be carefully garnered in view of future use, so that when the time comes to address his fellow-men, he may be able to hide the rigid, uninviting forms of doctrine as taught in the schools, under the attractive garb of bright imagery and graceful diction.

All this is equally true of every subject of discourse. Oratory and its laws are always the same. There are not two kinds of rhetoric, any more than there are two kinds of logic. Still, the nature of ecclesiastical discourse involves differences, and calls for special rules which have the name of Sacred Rhetoric, Sacred Oratory, or Homiletics.

A course of Homiletics is part of the training of all our seminaries. It comprises essentially two things: an explanation of the principles of sacred oratory, and a series of exercises in which they are sought to be applied. There are general principles which apply to sacred oratory in all its forms, and there are special rules for each particular form of discourse: the homily, the instruction, the exhortation, the panegyric, etc. Exercises are introduced in all these forms, sometimes in full, sometimes in mere outline, giving each student an occasion to develop his powers, while affording the teacher an opportunity of emphasizing the rules and principles, and of showing how they should be carried out. These exercises, if done with care, are invaluable. They are an anticipated experience of the real work. They reveal its difficulties, and show how they may be overcome. They reveal the writer to himself and to those who can guide and correct him. The practice of



constructing plans or outlines of sermons trains his mind to order and consecutiveness. In the careful development of single thoughts he learns to look more deeply into things, and to express them with more correctness, or delicacy, or power. It is much to be regretted that more time cannot be devoted to these exercises, as no other manner of training for the pulpit can compare with them when pursued intelligently and systematically.

### III.

The last thing in which the future preacher has to fit himself for his work is delivery. Elocution or delivery comprises everything in a man that speaks to his fellow-men; not only the voice, with its endless variety of modulations, but the play and expression of the features, the look, the gesture, the general attitude of the whole body. All these, as is evident, add indefinitely to the mere utterance of the words. They emphasize, they qualify; they convey with the thought all manner of emotions — joy, sorrow, pleasure, solemnity, love, hatred, in short, every feeling that can be awakened in the soul. Perfect elocution is the fullness of language, in that it conveys to his hearers all that a man thinks and all that he feels. Whatever is not conveyed is lost. If thoughts, however striking, are only half caught, or can be followed only by painful effort, they lose almost all their energy. If their beauty or delicacy is missed; if they come forth unaccompanied by any token of the feelings they are destined to awaken, they fall to the ground inert and powerless. The disarranged wire fails to transmit the message; there is no delivery. Here lies the difference between listening to the address of an able speaker or merely reading it. The text of his dis-

course may give us his thought or his argument more distinctly than we could have caught it by listening ; but that bright atmosphere of feeling which surrounded the spoken word is gone, and we remain cold, whereas his hearers were moved to the depths of their souls.

Elocution is therefore a vital element in the work of the preacher, and consequently a part of the preparation. For, like all our other natural gifts, the elocutional powers need to be cultivated. The need varies, it is true, with individuals and with races. The Italian, for example, or the Frenchman, with his vivid impressions and his emotional, demonstrative temperament, requires comparatively little training. His nature and his surroundings do almost everything for him. Individuals similarly gifted are to be found everywhere ; but the great majority, even of those who possess oratorical power, require for its full development a considerable amount of elocutional discipline. Natural eloquence alone no more fits a man for speaking than natural courage for fighting. The cultivation of delivery may indeed make a man artificial and conventional, but absence of cultivation does not make him natural. When untrained persons attempt to speak in public, besides many faults *natural* to them, but very unnatural and unpleasant to their cultured hearers, they assume, as a rule, the most conventional of tones, an unconscious imitation of some speaker they have heard and whose manner impressed itself on their memory. The manner of the trained speaker may begin by being artificial. Improvement in any original faculty begins by being artificial. There is generally a stiffness in beginners unpleasant to themselves and to others, as we may observe in those who are learning to sing, to play, to speak grammatically, or even to walk with grace ; but it gradu-

ally wears off with practice, and the new and improved manner becomes as natural as that to which it has succeeded. The evil of elocutional exercises, if otherwise judicious, is that they stop too soon, that is, before the speaker has reached that second stage of ease and spontaneity.

Not to extend these observations too far, we will conclude by remarking that there are two things in elocution so essential that they have to be secured at any cost: distinctness of utterance, and a due regard to the connection of words. Without the former, much of a discourse is fatally lost to the hearers; without the latter, the words fail to convey their full meaning. It may be safely said that nothing helps more effectively the hearer, nothing gives more force to spoken language, than a grouping of the words in keeping with the sense, a judicious breaking up of the sentences by pauses, sometimes lengthened, sometimes almost imperceptible,—a sort of intelligent punctuation in speech, appealing to the ear as the punctuation of writing appeals to the eye.

If, in addition to this, the imagination and the feelings are kept awake to the meaning of what is said, the other features of a good delivery will be sufficiently secured. Mannerism, on the contrary, a visible self-consciousness, an aiming at effect in the preacher, spoils everything. Better by far carry into the pulpit any number of uncorrected faults and imperfections than to discredit it by the exhibition of the preacher's moral weakness. The former may interfere more or less with the religious effect of the sermon; the latter is almost sure to be fatal to it.

We have considered in the preceding remarks nothing but the intellectual preparation of the preacher. It is

scarce necessary to add that his moral and spiritual preparation for that special work is at least of equal importance. There is, in that regard, a vast difference between preaching a sermon and writing an article or a book. What appeals only to the intelligence stands on its own merits, and it matters little to what sort of man we are indebted for a new and valuable fact of history or science. But in a sermon, which appeals to the whole soul, to the feelings, and to the will, as much as to the mind, it matters much who it is that preaches. The whole weight of the man is thrown in with his words, and the result is in proportion to the momentum thereby imparted to them. It is consequently the whole man that has to be fitted for the work; and every effort that lifts up the aspirant to a higher life will prove itself to have been the most effective preparation of all for the preaching of the Gospel.

## ARTICLE II.

### *THE LIFE-WORK OF THE PREACHER.*

Two forms of discipline, as we have seen, serve to prepare the young cleric for his future work as a preacher: first, his general studies, in all of which that work is kept constantly in view; secondly, a series of special instructions and exercises extending over the whole period of his theological course, by which he is initiated into the rules and practice of the art in its principal forms.

By these means, intelligently and steadily applied, much may be accomplished; and those who have turned them to the best account are generally found ready, at the appointed time, to assume the task which awaits them.



Yet it must be confessed that to no other duty do they find themselves, as a rule, so unequal at the outset. Preaching, seen in the distance, or attempted as a literary exercise, may seem easy enough; but when taken up for good, as a part of the sacred ministry, it proves to be surrounded by all manner of difficulties. Unless he confines himself to what is easiest, or simply appropriates the work of another, the beginner is perplexed at the very outset as to the choice of his subjects, and as to the aspect under which he should consider them; and when both have been determined to his satisfaction, the work itself still remains to be done. Materials have to be collected, and among them a selection made of what is most to the purpose. Then come the ordering and accommodating of all to the special requirements of the occasion, and, finally, the literary care to bestow on the whole work. No one of these things can be neglected, but it is a hard task on the young preacher to compass them all. When he attempts it for the first time, he generally finds himself confused in his conceptions, meagre in available knowledge, feeble in power of illustration and development; he discovers, in short, that his education as a preacher is only begun, and that, to say nothing of eminence, if he would reach even a fair degree of success, such as he is bound to aim at, a considerable amount of labor is still before him.

To describe briefly of what kind that labor has to be through life, and especially in the early years of the priesthood, is the object of the present article.

## I.

Progress in the art of preaching means, and can only mean, growth in religious knowledge, speculative and

practical, and in the power of impressing it upon a Christian audience.

As regards the knowledge of Christian doctrines and Christian duties, the youthful preacher, notwithstanding his lengthened course of preparatory studies, has yet much to learn. His dogmatic conceptions are still in many ways superficial, narrow, bound up in formulas, and lacking the openness, freedom, pliancy, and ready combination with other truths which characterize a thorough acquaintance with any system of thought. Why are doctrinal instructions often so dry, so uninteresting, so full of iteration? Mainly because the speaker is unable to enter into his subject more deeply. His knowledge stops short with the text of his manual, and has never been expanded by further study. The wider speculations of the great theologians, the views of the Fathers, the philosophy and the history of the doctrine itself, are almost entirely unknown to him. To its bearings on other truths, or on the conduct of life, he has given little or no thought. What wonder if his discourse is only a translation of his textbook, or a lifeless reproduction of what he has hastily gathered from some other source?

For similar reasons his moral instructions are equally defective. At the beginning of his ministry the young priest knows, indeed, the rules of moral and Christian conduct so as to be able to decide with sufficient accuracy the cases which come up before him in the tribunal of penance. But the knowledge strictly requisite in the confessor is by no means sufficient for the preacher. It is to the whole sphere of moral goodness that the work of the latter extends; to the lighter, as well as the graver duties of life; to counsel, as well as to precept; to the endless applications of the law, as well as to its abstract

general forms ; to the obstacles which interfere most with its observance, as well as to the motives which induce men most effectively to follow it.

Hence the need of a closer and deeper study of the Gospel and of its teachings, of the traditional spirit of the Church, of the practices of Christian piety, and the rules of the ascetic life. Hence, also, the necessity of knowing the world and the human soul. For they are the subject matter of the preacher's action. It is to his fellow-men that he is sent, to win them from their evil ways and turn them to God, and how can he do it unless he knows them as they are? It is not sin in general that he is expected to combat so much as the prevailing sins of his people. It is against their besetting weaknesses that he has to caution and strengthen them ; it is their special delusions that he has to dispel, their special temptations and dangers that he has to keep steadily before them. He must appeal in his proofs only to principles which they recognize, in his exhortations only to feelings to which they are alive, or which he has the power to awaken within them. And since, underlying the differences of individuals, classes, and races, there are fundamental, unchangeable elements of human nature which are the same in all, similar thoughts and principles, similar springs of action and life, the preacher has to be familiar with them all, so as to stir them into action with unerring touch, whenever he needs to appeal to them.

Such is the field of labor that spreads itself out before the preacher at the very outset of his career. But beyond it lies another much vaster, which he cannot neglect, the field of general culture.

The need of general culture in the orator — that is, in whoever is frequently called upon to address an audience — has been recognized from the beginning by all those who

have laid down the laws of public speaking. Aristotle, the greatest teacher among the Greeks, places it unhesitatingly in the foreground. The proper "invention" of striking ideas, he tells us, though in part depending on natural ability, depends still more on having the mind fully stocked with all kinds of knowledge. Cicero and Quintilian, the greatest authorities on the subject among the Romans, insist upon the same thing. In the judgment of Cicero, oratory includes the study of philosophy, of laws, of the structure and nature of man's frame, of the arts of reasoning, of history, and of poetry. Indeed, as Fénelon remarked, he seems to think that an orator should know everything; how much more the preacher, whose subject, Religion, is closely connected with every aspect of man's nature and history, while, in itself, it is a standpoint from which the whole world has to be viewed and judged. By no other means can the preacher keep his hearers constantly interested. A lively manner, grace, facility of expression, and other similar gifts may help much in that direction, and occasionally suffice to secure attention. But they can do so only occasionally, not habitually. The only thing of which the mind never wearies is fresh nutriment, new thoughts, new facts, new aspects of things. Iteration is fatal to the most striking and most solemn truths; and with those who are frequently called upon to speak, iteration is a necessity which can be averted only by accumulated wealth or steady growth of information.

The preacher should, therefore, like Bacon, "take all knowledge for his province;" he should at least keep his mind open in every direction, adding constantly new facts and new truths to his mental equipment. Philosophy, history, the events of contemporary life, the discoveries of science, literature, art, everything will prove serviceable.



There is not a law of nature or of mind, not a fact or feature of the visible world, that has not its counterpart in the moral and spiritual order; so that in this divinely established harmony the preacher finds an inexhaustible supply of images, analogies, and illustrations, which captivate his hearers, and shed a bright halo of light around his most arid and arduous subjects.

Finally, the resources and the power of the preacher thus assured, and with the proper materials at his command, he has to put them into shape; that is, from their confused mass, to evolve something clear, forcible, orderly, unmistakable in its purpose, with everything in its proper place and in due proportion, and where no element is admitted which does not lead to and subserve the object in view. This, indeed, is the most difficult part of the task, especially for the beginner, and requires most patient and persistent effort. But it has to be done at any cost. Something barely tolerable may perhaps be achieved without it; but all real, abiding oratorical power is won only at the cost of hard, enduring, and often ungrateful labor. Indeed, a man can improve in nothing if he contents himself with doing what is easy. Progress means strictness with self, a ready rejection or recasting of what is unsatisfactory, a patient retouching and improving of what is still imperfect, a constant striving to do one's best. In no other way have those succeeded whose names have come down to us in connection with any of the liberal arts. Such, in particular, is the experience of almost every successful preacher of past or present times. What seems to us so easy and so natural in their utterances is the fruit, they tell us, of persistent and often most painful exertion; and when the individual sermon has cost them little, it is only because of the considerable work that has gone before it.

## II.

This then is, in its general features, the labor which awaits all those who assume the duty of preaching. For no two is it entirely alike, each one having duties, requirements, gifts, facilities, and difficulties peculiarly his own. Yet there are certain common lines upon which all have to move, certain practices that cannot be omitted with impunity, and which, consequently, it will not be out of place to point out here.

1. *Reading.* — The preacher should read a good deal. He has to read in order to keep up that professional knowledge upon which his work mainly depends, and, again, to collect the special materials necessary for each one of his discourses. That general culture of which we have spoken can be acquired and maintained only by much reading. In one sense a preacher cannot read too much, nor on too many subjects, since all, as has been said, may serve his purpose; but, practically, he has to confine himself to what will serve it best.

From that point of view, nothing, of course, can compare with the Bible. The word of God is the choicest nutriment of the Christian soul; it should be the daily bread of the preacher. With a familiar knowledge of the Bible, he could almost neglect everything else, and yet speak in a fitting manner of all the great themes of Christian faith and Christian life. The Fathers had little else to turn to, and since their time it is at the school of the Bible that all great Christian orators have been trained; it is mainly from its sacred pages that they have gathered, not only divine truth, but depth of thought, sublimity of conception, majesty of diction, vividness of color, unction, inspiration,

— whatever, in short, gave them the power to sway men's souls, and turn them to God.

After the Bible, the Christian orators, ancient and modern; the Fathers, S. Augustine especially, and S. Chrysostom; not so much for what may be borrowed directly from them, as for the exhibition to be found in both of what true preaching should be — natural, spontaneous, full of life and full of the Gospel. As regards modern sermons, their helpfulness is too well known to need comment. There is, in fact, a common and constant danger of their being too freely used, the less industrious, as well as the less gifted, judging it easier to copy than to imitate them. In this connection it may be well to remark that all subsist more or less on what has been thought or said before them. Truth of every kind is a tradition, in form as well as in substance. To draw wealth from those whose treasures lie open before us is a sort of natural right, exercised consciously or unconsciously by all. Striking images, beautiful thoughts, deep truths, are promptly assimilated; and what is duly assimilated becomes part of ourselves, and is really our own. To use what comes in our way, by fitting it into the framework of our thoughts, and mingling it with what already fills our mind, is the very end and object of our intellectual intercourse with books and with living men. What injures the preacher, intellectually and morally, is the habit of living on the work of others with as little as possible of personal effort. The result is ordinarily poor, almost unavoidably so; for a discourse is essentially personal, and lack of individuality in it always means absence of power.

There are two other sources to which the preacher has constantly to turn for knowledge and inspiration: ascetical and devotional books, and the Lives of the Saints. But so

much has been said of both in our remarks on ascetic theology that we merely point to them here as being far more helpful to the preacher than is commonly thought.

In the matter of general reading, the preacher will naturally be guided by his own intellectual bent. If a choice may be suggested, we would say that the subjects most helpful are generally those with which his hearers are especially acquainted, such as the various arts and sciences, history, etc. Allusions to them are promptly grasped, and, if intelligent and judicious, are thoroughly enjoyed. We know how much S. Francis de Sales adds to the interest of his sermons and spiritual writings by the freedom with which he borrows illustrations from natural history, as he had learned it from Pliny and the ancients. The fuller and more accurate knowledge of our day would be still more profitable; and we have no hesitation in saying that in Sunday-school and familiar discourse the religious teacher would find in particular an inexhaustible supply of happy illustrations in a wider acquaintance with the habits and instincts of animal life.

Lastly, if the young priest would always clothe his ideas in the most appropriate language, he should keep in touch with the best literature. Reading authors is like living with them; one adopts unconsciously their modes of thought and their vocabulary. Here, again, a choice is necessary. In the abstract, the great writers, "the classics," are the best; and to enjoy them more than any others is a sure sign of a literary taste improved and refined. Yet, to many, writers of lesser name and merit may be more serviceable, because more accessible; and, practically, the preacher has to cultivate chiefly those from whom he gathers most inspiration, and in whose writings he finds the fullest and happiest expression of his own thoughts and feelings.



In this department the poets should have a special share. Oratory and poetry go hand in hand; they are sister arts. Both appeal to what is noblest in the human soul; both aim at reaching it through the imagination. The greatest thoughts and the highest aspirations look for their expression to the orator and to the poet. Nowhere can the orator find as with the poets that beauty of expression, that vividness of color, that grace and delicacy of touch, which add so much power and charm to a discourse. Bossuet, we are told, was wont to prepare himself for his immortal *Oraisons funèbres* by reading aloud a chant of Homer. From the greatest of ancient poets the sacred fire of inspiration leaped into the soul of the greatest of modern orators.

2. *Reflection.*—By reading, the preacher gathers the elements of discourse; by reflection, he assimilates them. The former is useless without the latter. Reading is simply a waste of time if the mind is not kept actively working on what is read, to understand, to judge, to unite what is of value in it with one's previous thoughts. Conversely, the thoughtful preacher makes everything available that comes under his notice. Like the artist who, pencil in hand, is ever busy, sketching picturesque aspects of things as he falls in with them, or quietly studying the outlines and play of features of the men he meets and converses with, and all in view of the pictures he means to paint one day; so the preacher observes, listens, takes in all the passing scenes of life in the book, the review, the daily paper, in his unceasing intercourse with his people. All his experiences of men and things are noted, remembered, to become, when occasion requires, some of the most valuable elements of his preaching.

Not only does reflection serve to assimilate what comes from without, but it prepares and widens the mind to re-

ceive what is thus offered, and urges it to pursue what is still distant. It begets a craving for knowledge, just as the physical appetite for food impels living beings in quest of it, and disposes the whole digestive system for its reception. Previous reflection is an absolute necessity in whoever prepares to write a sermon. His first care should be to think out and note down his personal conception of the subject and of its various developments, thus exercising his mental faculties and power of invention. After that he may read, and thereby enlarge or modify his original conception; but even thus transformed it still remains his own, and retains all through the impress of his personality. Preachers often fail to realize how much they lessen the value of their work, and, instead of shortening, lengthen it in the long run, by adopting the easiest and quickest way of composing their sermons. A single subject thoroughly thought out gives a power over the subject itself and all around it, with a general and ever-growing facility to handle all manner of subjects, which no amount of easier and less personal work can ever supply.

3. *Writing*. — To write much, especially in the beginning, has always been considered an essential part of rhetorical training. "The pen," says Cicero, "is the best of teachers," — *Stylus optimus ac præstantissimus dicendi effector et magister*; and he adds, *Caput est quamplurimum scribere*.<sup>1</sup>

Writing, for the preacher, has many purposes. He writes, first of all, to remember. He has his note-book, his alphabetical index, into which he gathers the various elements of his discourses of which we have spoken, as they come up before him; strong and impressive thoughts or arguments, happy presentations of doctrine, suggestive passages of Scripture, images, comparisons, etc. A the-

<sup>1</sup> *De Oratore*, 1, 33.

saurus of this kind is useful to the industrious compiler far beyond anything of the kind he may find already put together by some other hand.

The preacher writes, in the second place, to draw out his thoughts, and to formulate them in connection with each subject, to give expression to what is working within him, to establish a certain order in which the elements he has discovered or selected may be set forth. This, indeed, is a necessary preparation, but only a preparation for what is properly writing, that is, giving its ultimate shape to the sermon. It is this last manner of writing that Cicero has in view, that writing in which the composer puts forth all his literary power, and thereby develops it. Literary power is a thing of slow growth in most young men. Notwithstanding their long years of classical training, they go forth with a very limited knowledge of the art of rhetoric, or of the resources of their native tongue. Richness of vocabulary, appropriateness and vigor of expression, ease and grace of diction, a happy choice of words, — all that goes to make the trained writer or the felicitous speaker is still, in a great measure, wanting. Reading helps to give it, but it can be completely won only by the assiduous use of the pen. Bacon observes with much reason that "Writing makes the exact man." It sets his thoughts before him, and permits him, after due deliberation, to approve, to withdraw, or to modify them. It does him a similar service in a literary point of view, giving him an opportunity to weigh his words, to test his arguments, to brighten and polish his diction, to exert, in a word, all his literary judgment and ability. It is to the extreme care and patient effort bestowed on this manner of work that the greatest writers and orators chiefly owe their fame; and whoever, through inability, disinclination,

or lack of leisure, is kept from taking similar pains, can never hope to rise much above the common level.

4. *Advice.*—To know the mind of others in regard to our work, of whatever kind it be, is always most profitable. The youthful preacher has an especial need of it, yet there are few to whom that benefit is so commonly denied. Almost all those whose work appeals to the public—the writer, the composer, the artist—learn very soon what the public thinks of them. Through the various channels of public opinion, criticism, friendly and unfriendly, reaches them every day, while other results of a tangible kind tell them still more forcibly how far they have succeeded or failed. Not so with the preacher. The sermon being ordinarily part of a celebration which is obligatory on the faithful, or which may contain other attractions, that they attend in large numbers is no sign that they derive pleasure or profit from what they hear. Besides, a sense of reverence forbids them to be critical; and for this and other reasons very few care to convey to the preacher an unfavorable impression of his work; while those who express approval are too often of that kind that their sincerity is questionable, or that their judgment is of slight value. Those whose remarks would be most profitable are slow to speak, because they know that criticism, even when well meant, is rarely accepted, and serves too often only to beget resentment.

Is the young preacher, then, incapable of judging correctly his own work, fatally condemned to walk in darkness? Will nobody sustain him by praise he may accept, or point out to him what is obscure, or weak, or incomplete in his work?

The help will not be denied him if he is resolved to secure it at any cost.



*First.* — His pastor will usually give it, if humbly and persistently appealed to.

*Second.* — Other priests who habitually or occasionally hear him will be ready to do him the same service, if they see clearly that their remarks will be sincerely welcomed.

*Third.* — There may be those among his lay hearers who, with proper encouragement, will be induced respectfully to tell him what they think or what is commonly thought, and thus awaken his attention to faults that may, once pointed out, be easily corrected.

*Fourth.* — A written sermon can be submitted at any time to the candid and friendly criticism of a clerical friend, and always with advantage, whether his experience and literary gifts be greater or lesser than those of the writer. Some of the best and most successful preachers of the day are known to have never, during a long course of years, preached an important sermon without first submitting it to the judgment of some candid and competent critic. Surely the friendships of college and seminary life should be sufficient to secure later on a service of the kind to those who sincerely desire it.

Such are the chief means by which those who enter on the ministry may continue to fit themselves for the work of preaching. Few indeed, if any, can employ them to their full extent, but equally few are those to whom it is denied to use them, at least in a certain measure; and if they do so from the beginning, and as far as circumstances permit, the result will be such as to make it a pleasure for them to continue.

Two things they have to bear constantly in mind: first, that on all occasions, great and small, they owe it to God and to their hearers to do their work conscientiously and

carefully ; next, that while the multiplicity of their duties forbids them to give much time to each sermon or instruction, they will find it most profitable to have habitually in hand one or two subjects upon which they are putting forth all their power.

With the practice and experience of years, the preacher finds his work grows pleasanter and lighter. His individuality has developed ; he has become more and more himself. There has been a corresponding growth of power ; ripeness, measure, tact, practical wisdom, a sense of the concrete, have come without special effort.

Can he, then, cease to cultivate his mind, and live on what comes thus ? By no means. First, because it is the common condition of all man's powers, mental as well as physical, that, if they cease to be called into action, they deteriorate and decay. Who has not witnessed the operation of this law in the various conditions of life ? How often in particular do we not see men exceptionally gifted as speakers, after a period of success gradually decline, and ultimately become commonplace and uninteresting, simply because, for one reason or another, they no longer devote the necessary time or expend the necessary energy on their work !

Secondly, because freshness of thought is essential in a good speaker, and it can be maintained only by keeping the mind in unceasing contact with the sources of truth and inspiration.

Lastly, because even the best sermons of an earlier date need each time to be accommodated to the varying requirements of the hearers, and the changing conditions which time and circumstances effect in the preacher himself, else he and they will be found to have outgrown the sermon.

For all those, therefore, who are engaged in the sacred ministry of preaching divine truth, to whatever age or condition they may belong, one thing only remains: To gird their loins for unceasing work, and set before them, as a motto, the last words of the great Roman emperor to those who surrounded his death-bed, — *Laboremus*.

## CHAPTER XI.

## CHURCH HISTORY.

## ARTICLE I.

*IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY.*

IN one shape or another, Church History has always held a considerable place in Clerical Studies. But at no time in the past has it claimed the importance or won the recognition which have been given to it in the latter half of the present century. In every part of the Catholic Church a deeper knowledge of past Christian ages is being actively pursued; local traditions and memories are gathered in, archives explored, special periods studied with minutest care, new and vivid lights brought to bear on events and personages already known; voluminous historical works are ever issuing from the press, while reviews and manuals condense their wealth of information and transmit what is best in it to the student and to the general public.

In all this the Church has only followed the general movement of the age. In the unparalleled intellectual activity of the nineteenth century, spreading out almost in every conceivable direction, two departments of knowledge have had the principal share: Nature and History — the physical sciences and the past of the human race. It may be safely said that more work has been done in these two departments than in all the others put together, and that more has come of them; on the one side, an almost total



transformation of the conditions and habits of life ; on the other, changes hardly less deep in the convictions of men and in their intellectual methods.

## I.

History, with which we are concerned here, had always been looked upon as a necessary element of culture ; and to be entirely ignorant of it was held by Cicero as keeping a man in the condition of perpetual boyhood. *Nescire quid antequam natus sim acciderit, id est semper esse puerum.* Yet it must be confessed that for many ages its range was very limited ; and that long after modern investigation had enlarged its sphere, it still held only a subordinate place in cultivated minds, and was sought for more as a recreation than as a study. But in the present century a radical change has taken place. History has grown into one of the most comprehensive branches of human knowledge, and has come to be looked upon at the same time as one of the most effective forms of mental discipline. A hundred years ago only two such forms were commonly recognized, the classical and the mathematical. In our age two more have been added, the scientific and the historical.

By the discipline of historical study is meant much more than a mere knowledge of facts and of the lessons they convey. This manner of usefulness had always been recognized. From Cicero and Seneca to Bossuet and Arnold, educators had constantly enlarged on the value of history as a revelation of human nature in all its shapes, and of the various passions as they work in the souls of men. To history they were wont to send all those whose ambition it was to sway their fellow-citizens or whose calling was to direct or to rule them. To history, finally, they loved to

point as revealing the guiding presence of a divine power amid human events, and of a wise Providence shaping them slowly but surely for their appointed ends.

But what the moderns see in the study of history is, besides its direct value, the expansion and vigor it imparts to the faculties, and the habits of mind which it begets. Thus they call our attention to the fact that the three leading powers of the soul — the memory, the reason or judgment, and the fancy — are constantly appealed to and kept in play by historical work, in its various forms of research, testing of evidence, accounting for facts, or reducing them to organic unity. Besides, history, they tell us, expands the sympathies, broadens the mind, awakens interest in things far removed from self; it corrects the narrowness, the vanities, the insular notions of those who have known little outside their surroundings. "History," says Bishop Stubbs, "enables us to approach questions in which we are ourselves engaged with moderate and cautious treatment, to allow some of them to wait for solution, to determine others by the evidence of fact rather than by prepossession, and to let others alone altogether. Historical investigation teaches us patience, tolerance, respect for conflicting views, equitable consideration for conscientious opposition; we see how very differently the men of the particular time seem to have read the course of events which appear to us to have only one reasonable bearing; we see how good and evil mingle in the best of causes; we learn to see with patience the men whom we like the best often in the wrong, and repulsive men often in the right; we learn to recognize that the cause which we love best has suffered from the awkwardness of its defenders so great disparagement as in strict equity to justify the men who were assaulting it. We learn, too, and this is not the least

of the lessons, that there are many points on which no decision as to right or wrong, good or evil, acquittal or condemnation, is to be looked for, and on which we may say that, as often the height of courage is to say I dare not, and the height of love is to say I will not, so the height of wisdom is to have learned to say, I do not know.”<sup>1</sup>

## II.

But, irrespective of these and other similar benefits, history, simply as a picture of the past, has assumed in our generation an interest unparalleled at any other time. Our curiosity in regard to what has gone before us has become boundless; it grows steadily with what is meant to satiate it. Just as we want to know what is happening in the present, day by day, far and near, so we strive to ascertain what happened long ago, here where we live, and all over the world. It is the function of history to tell us; and the industry, the sagacity, the untiring energy, put forth by the hundreds who pursue their researches in every civilized country, are fully equalled by the accumulation of historic wealth added each year to the common store. Thus, to the explorers of Palestine, of Assyria, of Egypt, these old countries are yielding up secrets lost for centuries in their depopulated wastes, or hidden in their sands. By their discoveries ancient history is carried back centuries beyond its former limits; unknown forms of civilization are brought to light; archæology, philology, folklore, inscriptions, coins, medals, — every kind of testimony is listened to, weighed, combined with already ascertained facts, to become ultimately part of a structure broader, more solid, and nobler than ever. The methods of inves-

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Lectures on History*, 5th Lecture.

tigation are being constantly perfected; and, under their more scientific rules, facts and conclusions long in possession are submitted to newer and severer tests, and in many particulars the judgments of past ages are reversed.

Meanwhile, for periods less remote, the accumulation of accessible materials is simply bewildering. Within the last fifty years the archives of most of the courts of Europe have been fully thrown open for the first time; and the secrets of Church and State, hidden for centuries, have become public property, with the result of modifying deeply the most accredited and widespread opinions.

It is in this way that history has become in our time one of the leading objects of interest, wherever any degree of intellectual culture has entered. To this we owe the number of books on historical subjects coming forth from the press in an unceasing stream; hence also studies, memoirs, biographies, the abundant supply of historical articles to be found in our magazines, in our reviews, and even in our daily papers; hence the historical societies established almost everywhere, with their special organs devoted exclusively to facts and discussions which help to light up the past.

But the historic spirit of the age has extended itself farther still, in fact, incomparably beyond what was long considered the proper sphere of historical science. From the purely political interests of nations and the lives of great men, it has gradually come to embrace all the other important aspects of human existence. Side by side with the political histories of peoples, we have in our day their constitutional, their economic, their industrial, their literary history. It is felt that everything human has a history of its own, because in everything human there is a living development, a growth and transformation of ele-



ments which the attentive eye can follow, and that it is only by being thus followed that they can be properly understood. In this way a history has been worked out of all the principal forms of human knowledge. We have a history of the arts, of the sciences; a history even of what seem least subject to change, — theology, metaphysics, and mathematics. In fact, the historical spirit is everywhere; and history itself has come to be looked at less as a special science than as a special aspect of every science.

### III.

This, then, is the great fact which the clerical student has to set clearly before his eyes. He lives in an age when historical studies have assumed an importance quite unique; in which historical methods are familiar to all cultivated minds; in which historical demonstrations and conclusions have more weight than any others. In the ages of faith, authority reigned supreme; later on, abstract principles and logical deductions were predominant; in our day facts and inductions are everything, — the facts and inductions of science on one side, the facts and inductions of history on the other. It follows that no aspirant to the priesthood, hoping one day to influence his fellow-men, can fail to lay hold of so formidable a power and learn to wield it. The more he is prepared to appeal to history on any subject, the surer he is to get a hearing. In his own special department, history will go farther than any other argument to sustain his positions.

But, let it be remembered, this domain is not exclusively his, though he may call it his own; and at every step he will find himself in contact with the secular historian, handling with the same freedom as himself the facts and

problems of Church History. Nor can he complain of this as an intrusion, for Church History is, after all, only a special aspect of general history inextricably mingled with the rest. It is the province of the historian to take in all the great facts and forces of the past, and religion is unquestionably one of the greatest. Religious influences reckon among the deepest, the most abiding, the most productive of great and decisive events in the life of humanity; and the historian is bound to recognize, to appreciate, and to judge them. Even events that are religious in their substance have almost all a secular side. Take such facts as the investitures, the crusades, the reformation of the sixteenth century; take the whole series of relations between Church and State from Constantine to the French Revolution; what subjects more religious, yet what more secular?

To such questions—and they are numberless—the clerical student evidently cannot remain a stranger. He is one day to be, not only the exponent, but the defender, of religious truth, the armed champion of the Church, and history will be the scene of some of his hottest engagements.

It is now nearly a hundred years since de Maistre wrote that, during the two previous centuries, what is called history seemed to be nothing but a vast conspiracy against truth; and it must be confessed that the present age is far from having won a reversal of the sentence. True, there is much less of blind passion and of barefaced lying; there is often an evident wish to be fair; some of the most beautiful and touching homages ever paid to the Church have been written in this century by men who denied her divine authority, or who were even strangers to all Christian faith. But how much still remains, among the most

enlightened and most equitable, of unconscious prejudice, of misapprehension, and consequent misstatement of motives and of facts ! How much among the great majority of non-Catholic writers of overt or latent hostility ; what readiness to grasp at and magnify anything that may tell against the Church ; what readiness to admit the most damaging imputations on the slenderest evidence, sometimes on mere suspicion, or on the unscrupulous statement of an obscure or unreliable writer !

To remove in some measure this accumulated mass of error, to wipe from the face of the Church every manner of defilement by which the hand of man may have tarnished her divine beauty, becomes the duty of every Catholic priest. But for no other part of his work does he need a more thorough equipment. The adversaries of his faith are often men of great gifts, and thoroughly conversant with the subject, clergymen of various denominations, or laymen not unfrequently strangers to all Christian belief. It is on the field of history that they will have chiefly to be met. For Christianity and the Church claim to be primarily and principally great historic facts ; consequently it is by history that they must stand or fall. When the real value of institutions is judged by the measure in which they have helped to sustain and carry forward the human race, authorities and arguments are of little avail ; facts, and only facts, are practically admitted in testimony ; and so to facts, that is, to history, the defender of the faith has to turn ; with facts, those of his opponent or his own, he has all the time to deal, whether to controvert, or to prove, or to explain them. In other words, the controversialist, the apologist of the day, has to be, first of all, a historian.

## IV.

But this is, after all, only a secondary aspect of the case. Irrespective of all contention and controversy, the study of Church History is, itself, of surpassing interest and benefit to the enlightened Catholic generally, and still more to the cleric and to the priest. All that attracts the ordinary reader in secular history is to be found in it, often in a higher degree. The grand "march past" of bygone generations in the striking variety of their manners; the ever changing show of life, as it was lived for centuries; the great events which shaped the destinies of the world; the hidden drama of human passions laid bare, and behind them the gravest and most solemn issues, — all these impressive and thrilling features abound in the annals of the Church no less than in the history of the nations.

To the loyal Catholic especially, whatever bears upon the Church in the past as well as in the present becomes at once interesting. Her history to him is like a family record. It is also like the records of the people to which he belongs. And as the name of his country means little for the man who knows nothing of her past, whereas, if her memories be vividly impressed upon his soul, that same name will suffice to fire his imagination and strengthen him for the noblest deeds, so the history of the Church, her glories, her triumphs, the inestimable benefits which the world owes her, fills the Christian's heart with a sacred enthusiasm, strengthens his faith, and transforms his life into a homage of loyalty and love.

This is why we notice that, in all the Catholic Reading Circles recently established through the country, Church History is invariably taken up as one of the leading subjects of study. The members feel that they owe it to



themselves to know as much as they can of the past of the great institution to which they are proud to belong, and that no other manner of knowledge will be more helpful to raise their minds to a higher level, and strengthen them in the faith.

This very fact makes it additionally necessary that the priest should be familiar with the principal elements and bearings of the subject. Its growing prominence, inside as well as outside the Church, among the faithful as well as among strangers, exposes him to be appealed to, at every turn, for a statement of principles, or an explanation of facts, or for guidance in the study of special periods or events.

Indeed, his own studies, as we have repeatedly seen, all lead him back in the same direction. Dogmatic theology is a living science only on condition of being animated by history. Each doctrine has its special growth, its successive forms and manifestations, its developments born of contact with other truths, its struggles against error, its adjustment, often slow and difficult yet highly interesting, with other kinds of knowledge. To follow it through all these various phases is essential to a thorough understanding of it, and what is that but to master its history?

The same holds good of moral doctrines, of Church discipline, of liturgy, of ascetical and mystical theology. They all have their history, as has been already shown, and only through it can they be properly understood and appreciated. Lastly, the life of the cleric and of the priest is more completely identified than any other with the life of the Church. Her thoughts, her aims, her interests, her fluctuating fortunes, are all theirs in an especial sense. Her history is, as it were, the home of their minds, a second memory by which they live in her past, as by their personal

memory they dwell in their own, and make it an abiding part of their being. It is there they find the highest inspirations of religion, the best experiences of human life accumulated through ages. The history of the Church, like the Bible itself, is the record of God's dealings with His people, teaching the same lessons and conveying the same comforting assurances. "We," wrote the Jewish high-priest,<sup>1</sup> "need naught else, having for our comfort the holy books that are in our hands." So the Catholic priest, if he be thoroughly familiar with the records of the Church, needs little else for his own edification and that of others. After the Inspired Writings, nowhere can he find instruction more abundant, maturer wisdom, more stimulating examples. In a word, to no other intellectual pursuit can his hours of leisure be more delightfully and fruitfully devoted.

## V.

But before proceeding further it may be well to inquire what exactly is comprised under the title of Church History.

The question is suggested by the singularly enlarged conception of historical study which has gradually superseded the older one in other departments. A time was when secular history meant little but political history — wars and battles, conquests and treaties, dynasties and revolutions, with a due seasoning of diplomatic intrigue and court gossip. But another time came when it was felt that history had many things to tell besides the succession of kings and the doings of warriors and statesmen; that the nations themselves, the whole human race in its past, is the proper and only adequate subject of general history; that to contemplate the life of mankind, if possible, from

<sup>1</sup> 1 Mach. xii.

its humblest beginnings to its highest developments; to follow it, through endless difficulties and vicissitudes, in its upward and onward course; to watch the progress of the human mind in thought, in knowledge, in art; to follow the growth of societies in organic elaborateness and adjustment of functions, and the ever increasing share of the many in what had originally been the privilege of the few, — that all this was not less enjoyable to study or less important to know than what had hitherto engaged the attention of the student. As a consequence, without changing the fundamental notion of history, as the record of all that is worth knowing and remembering in the past, it has been made to embrace much that was scarce thought of in former times. Side by side with the political vicissitudes of peoples, we have their constitutional transformations, their economic growth, the history of their literature, of their institutions, of their manners, of their industrial developments, of their arts, etc.

Now the conception of Church History has undergone something of a similar enlargement. As understood by the great Eusebius, “the founder and father” of the science, as he has been justly named, ecclesiastical history was to be almost entirely concerned with the external aspects of the Church, “the succession of her bishops in the principal sees, the leading events and personages, the works and writings of those who helped most in the propagation of the Gospel, the errors of those who perverted its truths, the glorious names and combats of the martyrs who died for it.”<sup>1</sup> This programme of what we might call a political history of the Church was followed commonly by those who continued the work of the great historian. But, while accepting these more visible and salient features in the life

<sup>1</sup> Eus., *H. E.*, I. 1.

of the Church as their principal object, modern writers have devoted considerable attention to other questions not less essential, such as the evolution of her doctrines, the formation and transformations of her discipline, the moral and religious condition of society in each period, the developments of religious thought and the expansion of knowledge; finally, the connection of events and their underlying causes which constitute the philosophy of history.

Many of these newer aspects have unquestionably expanded under the influence of modern secular history. But modern secular history itself takes its birth in the history of the Church. It is from ecclesiastical records and monastic annals that most of its earlier facts are gathered. Its chronicles for centuries are the work of clerics, secular or regular. Long after the Greek and Roman models had become familiar to Europe through the Renaissance, it remains inferior in almost every respect to ecclesiastical history. It has nothing in the sixteenth century to compare with Baronius, or in the seventeenth with Fleury. The great documentary collections which are the groundwork of all deep historical study are mainly the work of Church historians. The Councils of Labbe or Mansi, the Greek and Latin Fathers of Migne, the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists, are as familiar to the secular student of the Middle Ages as to ecclesiastical writers. It is even to the same initiative that we are indebted for the chief collections bearing on civil and political history, the more recent compilations, though due to lay workers, being visibly inspired and guided by those of their clerical forerunners.

The same may be said of the critical faculty by which the original value of evidences is tested, both as to their authenticity and their trustworthiness. The growth, the diffusion, and the marvelous discriminating power of this



faculty strongly characterize the present age. But, although it has now reached a degree hitherto unknown, as an art it is so far from being unknown in the past, that the Benedictine editions of the Fathers stand forth as models of criticism to which our greatest modern scholars look up admiringly, just as they do to the work of the Bollandists, from its beginning, over two hundred years ago, down to the present day. In all the ancillary arts to which historians owe so much, — epigraphy, paleography, numismatics, diplomatics, etc., — these great ecclesiastics of the two last centuries have led the way. It is under their influence that the more solid form of documentary history has been gradually substituted for the literary form of an earlier period. Neither have we waited till now to see the historical method applied to doctrines. French theology shows it to us in full play right through the seventeenth century, while at the same time liturgical studies take a similar direction in the hands of Martène, Lebrun, Chardon, etc. In short, while admitting the wonderful progress made in history during the present century, and the commanding position held in that department by lay talent, we do not hesitate to look upon Churchmen as the originators of the great work that is being done in our times, and to claim for them the merit of having laid down the lines upon which it now proceeds, and taught the methods by which it is accomplished.

## ARTICLE II.

### *HOW IT SHOULD BE STUDIED.*

It is, therefore, to an enlarged conception of Church History that we have to look to-day, and this the more be-

cause the enlargement, however much aided from without, is in its substance an indigenous product of the Church herself. But, in speaking thus, we must not be understood as claiming an undue proportion of the cleric's time for historical studies. Too many other duties imperatively claim his attention to allow, in most cases, of anything beyond elementary knowledge. Yet even this has to be properly conceived, while an opening should always be left for further developments where time and circumstances may subsequently permit.

## I.

What then should the aspirant, what should the young priest, set before him and aim at?

Surely not all that is comprised in the subject. The field of Church History is immense, embracing, as it does, the whole past of the Church during eighteen hundred years. Even with nothing else to attend to, no single mind could compass such an amount of information, although confined to what is worth knowing, and that is comparatively little. For it is with the past as with the present. Who cares to look at thousands of objects which meet the eye at every turn? And why? Because there is nothing to learn from them. Who cares to remember thousands of personal incidents in one's own past? Why again? Because they are worthless, because they are meaningless. Facts, personal or otherwise, deserve to be remembered only if they have a meaning; that is, if they suggest to the mind a law, a principle, something broader and greater than themselves.

It is in this sense that, in his celebrated essay on history, Macaulay wrote: "Facts are the mere dross of his-

tory. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them and lies latent among them, like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value."

*Ut pictura poesis*, says Horace, poetry is like painting; and so is history. History is a picture of the past; and as the art of the painter consists, not in reproducing indiscriminately all the details set before him, but only those that are characteristic and help to give a true and vivid impression of the object, so history, be it ecclesiastical or secular, takes up only what helps to bring out an image of bygone personages and events, and instinctively drops the rest. Yet between the two arts there is an essential difference, in that the painter has to confine himself strictly to reproducing only one view of what is before him; whereas the historian, in this more like the sculptor, represents his subject all round, that is, under a variety of different aspects. It follows that facts which are worthless from one point of view may be invaluable from another. The student, for example, who is concerned only with the diffusion of the Gospel, or with its influence on the nations of the world which it has won to its teachings, cares little for what regards the inner developments of doctrine, which are all important for the theologian, or for the evolution of Church discipline, which is the chief interest of history to the canonist.

Church History, therefore, does not mean the same thing for all; yet, whatever aspect may be ultimately cultivated with especial care, there are certain elements by which all have to begin, because they are the foundations upon which the science is built, or, to use another and more truthful metaphor, the framework into which all subsequently acquired knowledge has to be fitted. Many of these elements come already to the student in early life; as he grows up

he learns many of the great facts of Christianity, as a part of his religious education, or simply as running through the course of general history with which they are so closely interwoven. He reads the *Lives of the Saints*; and, later on, his theological studies bring him into contact with some of the greatest characters and most important events of Church History. But the knowledge thus acquired is incomplete, unconnected, and often inaccurate. What is needed is a consecutive, systematic view in which all the necessary elements are brought together and set forth in their proper place, and with their due proportions and relations. This may seem easily within the reach of whoever wishes to attain to it, and many think that history can be learnt any time from books. So it may be, after a fashion. A general impression of past ages may be reached in that way, and perhaps a more definite knowledge of certain special periods or events. But anything like a philosophical view of history as a whole, or even a firm, intelligent grasp of events, is hardly possible without special training. Church History, to be properly learned, has to be *taught*, like the other branches of clerical knowledge; and this is why, notwithstanding the crowded condition of our programmes of study, room has been made for it in all our seminaries. It is, therefore, as a seminary course that we will consider it in the following remarks.

## II.

Four things go to make such a course effective: minds prepared for the study, a judicious programme, a competent professor, and a good text-book.

*Mental Preparation.* — The mental equipment necessary for the study of history varies naturally with the thor-



oughness with which it is expected to be pursued. A child may understand and enjoy what is purely descriptive or picturesque; while the critical discussion of certain facts and inductions often requires the highest mental powers, as well as patient training and incredible labor. At every stage a genuine taste for historical knowledge is necessary. Yet that taste is weak in many, either because never developed, or through lack of power to remember facts, or because no salient objects stand out before the imagination around which historical facts naturally entwine themselves. This last deficiency is naturally more noticeable in new countries. In the old world, everything points to the past; everything stands forth laden with memories. The cities, the monuments, the ruins, the very names, are historic. In new countries it is just the reverse. Local memories extend back only to a few generations; no object recalls any distant event, and it is only by a considerable effort, or as a result of careful general culture, that any genuine, hearty interest is awakened in what belongs to distant ages.

This is one of the difficulties against which teachers of ecclesiastical as well as of secular history have to contend in this country. Another is found in the imperfect knowledge of secular history only too common in young men at the close of their college course. Of ancient and national history they may possess a fair knowledge; but it is not with ancient Greece and Rome, or with the United States, that the Church has spent the eighteen hundred years of her existence; it is with the new world born of the decay of the Roman Empire; it is with the barbarians who under her civilizing influence became the great nations of mediæval and modern Europe, France, England, Germany, Spain, Italy, to say nothing of other nationalities less conspicuous though scarce less interesting. In other words, it is a

knowledge of mediæval history that prepares for Church History, with which it is so constantly interwoven that one can scarce be understood without the other; yet it is just that part of general history that is least known to the average graduate of our colleges.

*The Programme.*—The programme of an elementary course of Church History will depend in some measure on the time assigned to the study, though the difference will be felt, not so much in the character of the questions, as in their number and in the thoroughness with which they are handled. However limited, the course should comprise:—

1. An outline of the main facts and features of the Church's life in the past; her doctrinal and disciplinary developments, with the circumstances which gave rise to them; her relations, friendly or unfriendly, with the temporal power; her great men. A proper arrangement of these elements is a necessity, and at the same time a real difficulty. Church history, even when confined to essentials, forms such a vast and complicated network that without some amount of subdivision and classification it could not be handled at all. At the same time, one cannot but feel how arbitrary such divisions frequently are. It is we who, most of the time, and as a matter of convenience, break up history into centuries and reigns, or group minor objects and personages around greater. History itself flows on, now more smoothly, now more precipitously, but without breaking itself into those regular, symmetrical forms under which we are wont to conceive it. This is why historians feel at liberty to group their materials in the way that best suits their purpose, some following as closely as possible the chronological order, others departing from it freely; this one mingling the aspects of each period, while another keeps them distinctly separate. The best order,

practically, is that in which the elements are best understood and easiest remembered.

In this connection we should also remember that the two guiding lights, or, as they have been sometimes called, "the two eyes" of history, chronology and geography, are not less necessary to the proper intelligence of religious than of secular events. Facts lose half their meaning and all their connection, if it be not known when or where they happened. Their association, besides, with definite times and places is their best chance of being remembered.

2. Besides the leading facts and conclusions of Church History which are looked upon as ascertained, there are others, which give rise to ardent controversies, and may be with many a matter of honest doubt. Among them are some of special importance or interest to the Catholic mind, and even in an elementary course of history they have to be pointed out, and, as far as circumstances allow, duly investigated. They constitute almost all the apologetic and polemical side of the subject, which, as we have seen, is second to no other in importance.

3. Some notion should be given, — the fuller the better, — of the sources from which the history of each period or the data of each leading question are gathered. It is only thus that a truly scientific character is imparted to the study. As a science, history has to be built on solid foundations; if important facts are adduced, they have to be proved; if testimonies are appealed to, their value has to be ascertained. This, of course, cannot be thought of even for all that is important; but the student must know where the proofs are to be found and how to find them. He has to be taught, if only by a more thorough study of one or two questions, the methods of investigation which have

been carried in our day to such a high degree of perfection.

*The Professor.* — The third requirement is a competent professor. As already observed, history to be properly learnt requires, as a rule, to be taught, and it is perhaps in the elements that the action of the teacher is most needed. With the beginner, facts, dates, personages, imperfectly known, are liable to be confused and are easily forgotten. He misses their true relations and their relative importance. The teacher makes up for all that. He keeps things in their proper place and in their due proportions. His very manner and diction will often suffice. His teaching, like all oral teaching, is a powerful help to the memory of his hearers; and, after all, only what is remembered is of any particular value.

That such teaching may be entrusted to any man of fair abilities is a great, though not at all uncommon, mistake. The truth is that the professor of history requires a rare combination of gifts; sagacity of observation, breadth of mind, imagination, that is, a power of living in the past and even of reconstructing it from imperfect data, a judicial temper, an incorruptible spirit of fairness; finally, a thorough, familiar knowledge of facts. There is scarcely any subject in which the teacher has so much to be taken at his word, especially in the elements; for a clear, definite, vivid statement of facts and results is what is needed by beginners. There is no room for elaborate discussions, and it is only after some time that minds are ripe for them.

*The Text-book.* — A text-book, finally, is a practical necessity. It embodies the most essential particulars, facts, names, divisions, dates, summary judgments, and the like, and thus becomes a necessary help to the memory. It keeps things clear and orderly; it prepares the mind for



the work of the teacher, and supplies details easily missed, or, it may be, entirely omitted. It need not be a readable book, though if, in addition to the rest, it can be made attractive, as is the case with some of our manuals of secular history, that would be better still. But it has to be —

*a. Exact*, that is, free from the mistakes and antiquated notions which cling with peculiar obstinacy to historical manuals.

*b. Up to date*, that is, exhibiting the most important results of recent discussion and investigation. Their absence is less pardonable than slight occasional mistakes of fact or of judgment.

*c. Complete*, touching on every subject the teacher handles, and containing at least some reference to the various problems to be discussed by the student, or regarding the existence of which he should not be left in ignorance. A list of authorities should naturally accompany the more important of them.

*d. Methodical*, that is, orderly and logical, showing the real connection of things ; marking off periods, personages, etc., so as to give them that distinctness and vividness by which they are impressed on the memory and easily retained.

Such a manual is invaluable to professor and students. To the professor it belongs to supply the life and interest which may be missing in it, to invest its dry bones with flesh and blood ; finally, to keep his students ever conscious of the fact that history is not a conventional arrangement of separate events, but a living growth, a simultaneous action of the whole system, each event being the result of numberless influences, primary or secondary, remote or proximate, and each having in turn its active, though not always visible, share in what follows.

A few remarks in conclusion on the arrangement of courses.

Our readers know already how many other important subjects claim the available hours of the seminarist, and it is easy to understand the reluctance with which the representatives of the other branches yield up to the latest claimant any portion of the time heretofore at their disposal. Yet it is only what is happening in every college and university through the country and all over the world. Everywhere more time is devoted to historical studies. Surely there is no reason why it should be otherwise in our theological seminaries. Twenty-five years ago a single professor sufficed for all the historical work that was done in Harvard, whereas now there are seven professors and instructors, with as many as twenty different courses. A similar increase is found in Yale, Columbia, Cornell, etc. In Johns Hopkins, from the very beginning history assumed a most prominent position which it has never ceased to hold. This is only the counterpart of what is happening in every country of Europe.

As regards the distribution of the work, whatever the time devoted to it, two methods are conceivable; one consisting of a single course followed out consecutively during a period of three, four, or five years, which the students drop into as they come up year after year, and follow the best they can; the other devoting the first year or two to the outlines of the subject, while, for the subsequent years, a second course is given to a closer study of some more important questions.

The advantages of the second method are obvious. It permits students to begin at the beginning, to deal first with what is more accessible, and to prepare a fitting framework for what will follow; while it affords an opportunity

to the professor to accommodate his programme year after year to the requirements of the time, or to the special needs of his hearers.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *LATER STUDIES.*

The work done in our seminaries on Church History is very limited; nor can it be otherwise, considering the narrow space that is grudgingly allowed it. Yet it suffices to introduce the subject to the attention of students, and to awaken their interest. A vast and varied landscape has been spread out before them, of which they remember only the general impression and more salient features; but that is more than enough to make them desirous of going over the ground at leisure, and visiting in detail what seemed most attractive. To something of the kind almost every young priest looks forward as he enters on the work of the ministry; and, indeed, there are few subjects, if any, from which he justly expects to derive more profit or more pleasure. We may add that there are none of more abiding interest, none whose attractiveness grows more steadily with increasing knowledge, or loses less with advancing years.

But in order to preserve its full usefulness and charm the study has to be limited. Church History is too vast a region to be explored with care by any single mind, especially by one engaged with many things besides. It is for each one to single out what suits him best, that is, what meets best the requirements of his position and surroundings, or corresponds most completely with his turn of mind. As a fact, it is in following one or other of these

indications that most students strike out on some special lines; and perhaps the best thing a beginner can do, if undecided, is to feel around him in various directions until he has found what interests him most, and keep to it. Yet even to such it may not be unwelcome to find a brief indication of the courses that are commonly followed.

## I.

*Periods.*—There is, first of all, such a thing as selecting a special period, and getting a thorough knowledge of it. Like all history, that of the Church divides itself naturally into a certain number of epochs, each having its characteristic features and its special interest.

1. At all times the early ages of the Church have possessed a special attraction. To the student of Church History they presented the spectacle of primitive Christianity uncontaminated by later evils. It was the heroic age of the Church, the glorious era of the martyrs, crowned by the conquest of the world to Christ. The great upheaval of the sixteenth century added fresh interest to the subject, Protestants being in the beginning at one with Catholics in considering these early times as a period of uncorrupted faith, to be studied, consequently, with special care in order to ascertain the original teaching of Christ and of the Apostles. Later on, the controversial interest of the study became less, many Protestants declining to be bound by anything but the "Word of God." But many more remained faithful to the original conception; and so, for them as for Catholics, the early ages retain all their importance and all their attractiveness.

2. Yet Catholic students turned more commonly in the last generation to mediæval times. The "Dark Ages,"



as they were called, long passed over as unworthy of notice or spoken of only with contempt, proved, when studied more closely, one of the most stirring, striking, eventful, and poetic periods of all history; a period of great thoughts and heroic deeds, when the barbarous hordes which had overrun Europe centuries before, now won to the faith and molded by the strong yet gentle hand of the Church, stood forth a new and noble type of manhood; when all bowed unquestioningly to the truths of the Gospel and to the authority of the popes; the "ages of faith," the era of the Crusades, the era of doctors and of saints, so eloquently described by Montalembert in his introduction to the *Life of S. Elizabeth of Hungary*, and in terms not less tender and touching by the positivist, Frederic Harrison, in his essay on *The Connection of History*.

3. To many the period of the Renaissance and of the Reformation is the most attractive of all; a time of universal upheaval — political, literary, religious — such, perhaps, as the world never witnessed before; a leavening of society by new principles and new forces, and a general overflow of pent-up life, with consequences which are deeply and universally felt to the present day.

4. But it is not to those more exciting epochs that the majority of students turn in our times. It is not the bright and brilliant periods of Church History that attract them; it is the obscure beginnings of what subsequently grew into greatness. Indeed, in every sphere of investigation, one of the most marked tendencies of the present is to trace things back to their very inception. Whatever has life and growth is followed up to its earliest and humblest beginnings. The original germ and the first differentiation of parts concentrate the attention and absorb the in-

terest of the biologist; he cares less for what has assumed its definite forms. In like manner, the historian of to-day aims chiefly at reaching the primeval facts and conditions in which the great movements of subsequent times originated. In early Church History what is investigated with special eagerness is its very beginnings; the organization of the new society, not such as it is seen in the third or fourth centuries, but as it stood in the lifetime of the Apostles or in the following generation; the doctrines of Christianity, not as they stand out in the writings of Ambrose or Augustine, but as they were understood by the first disciples of the Gospel. In like manner those engaged in the study of the Middle Ages bestow more care on the earlier and less striking portion of them than on what follows, because in the former they find at their birth all the hidden forces which led in due time to great subsequent events. Or, again, they turn with keen interest to the dull and degenerate times comprised within the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in order to watch the slow accumulation of elements whose explosion shook the world in the following age.

Thus it happens that there is scarcely a single portion of Church History that may not offer a lively interest to the careful investigator. But the subject lends itself to many other divisions and limitations, and one of the principal is that of —

## II.

*Great Historic Movements.* — The history of the Church, like that of the nations, is chiefly composed of a certain number of religious movements which originate, develop, and pursue their course for years or for ages, sometimes independently, more often mingling together or uniting

with secular forces, or crossing and counteracting each other like the great ocean currents. Such, to give some examples, was the wonderful diffusion of the Gospel from the beginning, and its irresistible progress through ages of persecution. Such, later on, the pacific conquest of the Roman Empire, the subjugating of the barbarians to the yoke of Christ; or, again, the great missionary work of the two or three last centuries. Such may we consider the origin and growth of the temporal power of the popes, or the social and political authority which they wielded, with varying efficacy, through the Middle Ages. Such the Crusades; the development of the religious orders; the great doctrinal movements, from the Arianism of the fourth century to the Rationalism of the nineteenth; in particular that great revolt against Church authority, the Protestant Reformation, whose history, in Germany, in France, in England, Scotland, and Ireland, offers some of the most important chapters to be found in all the annals of the past. There are many similar streams of collective life running through the whole field of Church History, all most interesting to follow,—aspects of Christianity, dogmatic, moral, social, political, even artistic and literary. It is easy to see how each one of these may become the object of a special and most captivating study.

### III.

*Great Historical Characters.*—It is a debated question among speculative writers how much or how little, in the course of public events, is due to individual action. But it can hardly be doubted that, equally in Church and state, the individual character of a few has impressed itself deeply on their contemporaries—sometimes on subsequent gene-

rations; and it is clear to all that, in our conception of the past, there are a certain number of leading figures around whose action and thought all the rest seems to gather itself, so that to know any of them is to know the period to which he belongs, or at least what is best worth knowing in it. Indeed, the individual can himself be properly understood only if seen amid his real surroundings; hence the custom among modern biographers to join to the history of their personages that of the period to which they belonged, — “a history of the life and times,” as it is called, in which the times are, as it were, the background on which the portrait of the man stands out.

Much of what is most valuable in Church History comes to us to-day in this shape. Biography demands detail, and it is detail that gives life. Through it we get the truest and most vivid pictures of the past, and what, besides, is best remembered. A limited number of well-chosen lives — of great popes, of great leaders of thought or action, of great saints — will give, in the most entertaining shape, not indeed a full knowledge of the facts of history, but an impression of the past in its different periods, more striking and more true than can always be gathered from ponderous tomes and lengthened study.

#### IV.

*Problems.* — Side by side with the authentic documents, the ascertained facts, and unquestioned conclusions of ecclesiastical history, there are many others regarding which believers and unbelievers, Catholics and Protestants, Catholics themselves, — sometimes even the most enlightened and the most sincere, — are divided. Of such points the great majority appeal only to specialists; yet some remain,



in every age of the Church's history, which are of interest, occasionally of the deepest interest, to the general reader. Those especially whose mission it is to represent the Church among their fellow-men, and to defend her, cannot remain strangers to what may in any degree affect her good name. Thus such questions as the deposition of sovereigns, the Inquisition, Galileo, the character of certain popes, etc., call on their part for a thorough investigation. But, irrespective of all controversy, there are countless questions connected with the Church's doctrines, her institutions, her influence and action, her great men, and the like, which cannot but awaken the liveliest interest in the mind of a priest, and make him strive, so far as he can, to ascertain the exact truth.

## V.

*Practical Difficulties.* — But where, it will be naturally asked, can he find information on all these subjects? Surely a large historical library would scarce suffice to meet all the requirements of the work suggested in the foregoing pages.

It is true; but, then, no single individual is supposed to take it all upon himself. The notion is, on the contrary, that each one shall confine himself to a comparatively small portion of it; and, if he do, a very limited number of volumes, judiciously selected, will be found to suffice. We cannot be expected here to give an indication of the best books connected with the many questions referred to. Most of the latter have a special group of their own, while dealt with also in works of a general character. Unhappily much of the literature is found only in languages such as German or French, of which only a minority of the clergy have a practical knowledge, or in Latin,

which, though understood, of course, by all, is read with pleasure by comparatively few. Yet the interest of the subjects is well calculated to make some at least overcome the difficulties of the languages through which the best information is accessible, and a specialist has to master them at any cost. As for the ordinary student, he will find some of the most valuable books translated into English, so that, without going outside that tongue, a considerable amount of information may still be reached on most points of interest.

## VI.

But whatever direction is taken, whatever choice made, it has always to be remembered that in the matter of history, the almost universal trend of the modern mind leads back to a study of —

*Original Sources.* — A certain knowledge of them is, consequently, of greater necessity now than at any previous period. No student is supposed to have investigated with care any portion or any question of history unless he has made himself acquainted in some measure with the earliest documents and authorities on the subject. He must know what they are and of what value; he must have acquired some direct knowledge of them, the fuller the better, and always enough to lead him back to them on points of doubt or difficulty.

For the first ten or twelve centuries, Migne's *Latin Fathers* and any general collection of Councils will be found to contain most of what is serviceable in that regard. The *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius can hardly be called an original source; yet it may be considered as such, not only because it is the oldest work of the kind we possess, but also because it is, in a great measure, com-

posed of textual quotations from primitive documents; so that it is principally to this invaluable work that we are indebted for what we know of the early history of the Church. No student should fail to read it; and if, as is likely, he thereby contracts a happy taste for getting things at first hand, he can indulge it with little trouble and much profit, right through the subsequent ages. Thus Sozomen or Theodoret (both to be had in English as well as Eusebius) will carry him through the fifth century. In the correspondence of S. Gregory the Great he will get a wonderful insight into the condition of the Church and the Empire a hundred years later; while for the same period he will find, in the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours, a striking picture of the barbarians emerging, under the hand of the Church, into civilized life. In the following century Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* will introduce him to the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon Church; and Eginhard's *Vita et gesta Caroli Magni* will supply a lifelike portrait of the person and times of the great Christian Emperor whose history is substantially identified with that of the Church during his lengthened reign.

In the following ages contemporary records abound — biographies, chronicles, monastic annals, memoirs, etc. To have read any of them is to get an impression of the period to which they belong, and, with it, a power of appreciating characters and events, such as can scarce be obtained in any other way.

In this connection there are two original sources of ecclesiastical history which should not remain unmentioned, — the *Acta Sanctorum*, or great Bollandist collection of the lives of the saints, begun upwards of two hundred years ago, and still unfinished, and the *Collections of the*

*Councils.* Their ponderous tomes are, indeed, at first sight, very uninviting; but nobody thinks of reading them all, and, on the other hand, it is almost impossible to look into them with any care, and fail to be captivated by their contents. It is like visiting a museum of ancient or mediæval art, or walking through the unearthed city of Pompeii, and gathering from its ruins the picture of a great civilization long lost and but faintly reflected in our own.

But we must not be understood as saying that these early documents are to be found only in the great collections or ancient books of which we have spoken. The aim of most modern historians is to give them as great a space as possible in their narratives. There is no room for them in our manuals; but our chief ecclesiastical histories, such as Baronius, Natalis Alexander, Tillemont, Fleury, Rohrbacher, etc., are largely made up of them. No writer has contributed more to beget a love of the ancient Church and her monuments than Fleury in his lengthened but never tedious narrative. Indeed, he carried the love of antiquity to a fault, every departure from it being considered by him as a sign of decay. This, with a constant concern to limit the power of the popes and to exalt that of temporal sovereigns, give a bias to the whole work. Rohrbacher's history is a great book, but not always reliable. Still less is that of Abbé Darras. Like Rohrbacher, he makes the mistake of starting from the creation of the world, and relating the history of the chosen people — a subject which can be properly handled only by Bible scholars. Like Rohrbacher, too, he is one-sided, holding a brief right through for the popes and for all ecclesiastical action, and too often disposed to explain away, or minimize, or deny what is not in harmony with his preferences, or seems less creditable to the Church.



We still await an entirely satisfactory history of the Church. Can it at any time be hoped for? Can a single mind be ever expected to grasp so vast a subject? Can any man so entirely divest himself of his own preferences and prejudices as to see always the real past and describe as he sees it? Or, compelled as he must be to take many things at second hand, will he always trust the right authorities, and will not his very impartiality, if he attain to it, reduce his work to a cold, soulless, uninviting statement of events?

It is because they are sensible to all this that so many at the present day strive to get behind even the larger and more reliable histories, and accept nothing of importance without verifying it themselves. Yet they are not the less ready to acknowledge their indebtedness to historians, as supplying the necessary framework, as well as numberless details in which they are entirely reliable.

## VII.

*Non-Catholic Writers.* — Finally, in a country like this, the study would not be complete without some knowledge of the subject as presented by Protestant writers. In anything like habitual intercourse with those outside the Church the facts of her history are constantly coming up, and are frequently made a matter of discussion. To be prepared for it, the priest has to know other versions of things as well as his own; and where can he find them better than in the favorite historians of his opponents?

Of these it will suffice here to mention a few.

The first is Gibbon. With all its blemishes *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is one of the greatest historical works ever written. In the vastness of its propor-

tions, its prodigious mastery of details, clear conception when not blinded by irreligious prejudice, in its condensed thought and magnificent diction, it remains unsurpassed, not to say unequalled, in its special sphere. It is still widely read, not only as a classic of the English language, but as a most graphic picture of Church and state during more than a thousand years. No special student of controversial history can remain a stranger to it.

The second is the *History of Christianity* and the *History of Latin Christianity* by Dean Milman. His corrective notes on the *Decline and Fall* of Gibbon had prepared him for, and possibly suggested to him, an original work on almost the same subject. As a fact, he covers nearly the same ground, tells substantially the same story, his chief personages are the same; but the purpose is different, that of Gibbon being to recount the decline and fall of the Empire, that of Milman to describe the rise and growth of the Church. But he does it all as a Protestant of a somewhat skeptical disposition might be expected to do it. His opposition to the Catholic Church has made him, as well as his brilliant literary powers, a favorite author among Protestants; his judgments are for the most part accepted without question; it behooves consequently the Catholic student of history to make himself acquainted with his very able work.

The third is the voluminous and able *History of the Christian Church*, by Dr. Schaff, generally as fair as could be expected.

The last we would mention is *A History of the Christian Church*, by Professor Fisher of Yale. In a single volume the learned and fair-minded writer presents, — naturally from the Protestant standpoint, — the main facts of the Church's history — a most convenient means for the

Catholic student to know how Protestants generally view them.

From what has been said it is easy to see in how many ways Church History may continue to be cultivated by a priest, even in the spare hours of a busy ministry. It is incredible how much may be done if the labor is persevered in steadily for a certain number of years. To those who proceed thus helps come of themselves, fresh sources of information are ever opening up, — historical articles or addresses, discoveries, books old and new, — each stimulating the mind to fresh thought and more eager research. It is well that, in view of all these opportunities, the mind should not be fixed exclusively on any one aspect of things. To keep alive to all sides of a question and to all manner of questions, besides broadening and strengthening, enriches with all that is best in what one handles. Books teach not so much in proportion to their intrinsic value as to the receptivity of the reader, and receptivity means openness and reflection. With a few books Abbé Gorini became a historian; but his open and reflective mind took in all he read, and assimilated it all. By cultivating the same mental qualities, there are hundreds of priests through the land who, without adding a dozen volumes to their libraries, could win a place scarcely less honorable in the field of history.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### *THE MENTAL REQUISITES OF THE HISTORIAN.*

In the preceding pages we endeavored to show what may be done in the study of Church History by a priest amid the ordinary duties of the ministry. To the main facts

and features of the subject already mastered in the seminary course, with proper attention and the helps within his reach, he may, if so disposed, add much in subsequent years, — a firmer grasp and connection of events, a clearer and more accurate knowledge of certain great epochs and leading characters, a direct acquaintance with many things originally taken on trust. Ordinary intelligence, industry, and a taste for historical reading will suffice for that. But, to go deeper, and make history a specialty in any degree, something besides is requisite, — what is called the Historical Mind, or the Historical Gift.

Like the other leading forms of human knowledge, history appeals, not only to the general faculties of the mind, but also to its special gifts ; and, just as certain mental endowments make the philosopher, the scientist, the inventor, or the statesman, so others make the historian. But, as the original gift leads to little unless it be duly cultivated, it is only natural that, before concluding our remarks on this branch of study, we should point out more distinctly the qualities which go to make the successful student of history, and briefly show how they may be cultivated and developed.

#### I.

*The Critical Faculty.* — One of the most important is a complex power of the mind commonly called the critical faculty.

History has for its primary and necessary object the real past. But past realities, as they reach us, are often mixed with fictions and fancies, especially when they come from distant ages ; even when nearer to us, they may have already become distorted by passion or prejudice ; they have, therefore, to be carefully sifted. In some way or other the



student of history has to ascertain the value of what comes up before him. If he gets things at second hand, as is mostly the case, he has to decide how far his authorities are reliable, whether as regards the substance of the facts, or their details, or the proofs on which they are made to rest, or the conclusions that are drawn from them. If he goes back to the original sources, he has to determine at one time their genuineness, at another their real meaning, or the trustworthiness of the writer. Now, these and similar judgments constitute the sphere of the critical faculty.

The critical faculty, then, as considered here, is the power of forming a correct judgment on things appertaining to history. It is a branch of what Cardinal Newman so happily describes in his *Grammar of Assent*, under the name of the "Illative Sense," a complex power of the mind by which, from a multitude of data all seen together, judgments are formed and conclusions gathered. Applied to history, it admits of many varieties and of numberless degrees, from the exercise of the humblest common sense to the vivid intuitions and far-reaching inductions of the trained intellect. In some degree it is necessary even to beginners, but it has to grow with the difficulty and complexity of the problems with which the student has to grapple. The ancient historians of the Church were by no means devoid of it; indeed, we find it in a remarkable degree in the "Father of Church History," Eusebius. But it is sadly missing in most mediæval writers. In their time, the need of verification was not felt, its methods and means being equally wanting. Again, reverence forbade too close a scrutiny of whatever was deemed sacred, while a ready faith and love of the marvelous welcomed the most fanciful accounts, even of recent events.

Later on, with the diffusion of learning, the critical

spirit reappeared; and through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it grew rapidly in consciousness of power and breadth of action. With the Benedictines and Bollandists, already referred to, it reached such a degree of excellence in their respective fields that modern critics have left their work substantially untouched. But the movement to which they gave so vigorous an impulse continued its course; and, though too often unduly radical and unnecessarily destructive, it has led to results of which the present age is justly proud. Every point of importance in the past has been investigated in turn; and, as a consequence, all ancient history has been rewritten, the older works being superseded everywhere, in ecclesiastical as well as in secular history. Fleury, who, in the original French, and in its many translations and adaptations, had reigned supreme, almost to our day, is no longer an authority, and, notwithstanding the ease and charm of his style, has now ceased to find readers. Baronius, Tillemont, etc., hold their own, chiefly as abounding in documents. To documents original and authentic the modern historian invariably turns, embodying them in his narrative as far as the literary canons will allow, or summarizing them with a constant reference to sources. Each quotation is verified, each conclusion tested, each judgment revised, with the result of modifying positions which had for centuries remained untouched, strengthening some, weakening or destroying others, or maintaining them only with many qualifications.

It is in these more thorough and truly scientific methods that the student of to-day has to be trained. General rules of criticism are helpful, and they may be found in the *Introductio ad Historiam Ecclesiasticam criticè tractandam* of F. de Smedt, S. J., or in his excellent little volume, en-

titled *Principes de la Critique Historique*. But criticism, let it be remembered, is an art; and no art can be learned by rules only. Principles have to be combined with practice. The student has to determine the trustworthiness of each book he takes up, basing his judgment on the reputation of the writer, or on the particular features of the narrative, each form of test strengthening or qualifying the results reached by the others. For example, even though we had never heard of Froude or Darras, a thoughtful reader cannot go far into one or the other without distrusting their guidance. In general, nothing helps more to appreciate what belongs to, or refers to, a period than a previous acquaintance with contemporary documents. It makes the study like reading up what has happened in a country one has traveled through, or in which one has lived. We may add that as an introduction, in particular, to a critical study of early documents, perhaps there can be nothing better than to take up one of the recent critical editions of the Apostolic Fathers, as given by Hefele or Funk, or still more thoroughly by Archbishop Lightfoot.

Once awakened, the critical faculty exerts itself instinctively, grows with each fresh exercise, and acquires in the true historian a marvelous delicacy of touch. He sees, often intuitively, what is spurious and what is genuine; he determines with accuracy the amount of credence to give to all manner of statements that come under his notice. His judgments often differ from those of the uninitiated, nor can he always fully justify them, but he feels them to be right. Hence he may feel quite sure of what seems to rest on slender evidence, because he sees it to fit in, by a sort of undesigned coincidence, with many other things unquestioned; on the other hand, he may be far

from entertaining the common assurance regarding many things, because he knows that, though repeated by scores of historians, they ultimately rest on the testimony of a single writer whose means of information may have been very imperfect, or whose accuracy there may be nothing to vouch for. In like manner, instead of accepting as of equal value the substance of an event and all its circumstances, he carefully discriminates between them, knowing that, while the former may be beyond question, the latter are seldom more than probable; so common is it with those who would seem most reliable to contradict each other in matters of detail, and even for the same narrator to give accounts at different times of personal experiences which it is impossible entirely to reconcile. It is on record that the writer who undertook to give a full and faithful narrative of the battle of Waterloo, all drawn from the letters and recollections of men who shared in it, only succeeded in bringing together a mass of evidence utterly self-contradictory, as well as opposed to the accredited accounts of that great event. The abundance of documents often only adds to the perplexity of the writer; and we can well understand the temptation to which one confesses, after an experience of the kind, of abandoning altogether the study of history, and betaking himself to fiction.

To sum up: historical criticism implies judgment, perspicacity, insight, a gift for sifting evidence, for weighing testimonies; a certain literary sense enabling to discern what documents are genuine and what spurious, what is primitive in them, and what a later addition; a quickness to see what is likely or unlikely in a given time or place, what narratives are trustworthy or the opposite, what is real and what fanciful in the connection established between facts and the conclusions drawn from them. It is



the common sense, the tact, inborn and cultivated, with which a man separates historical error from truth, builds up the latter on solid foundations, and follows with keen eye and equitable appreciation, at its every stage, the historical work done by others. Rare in former times, it has become a not uncommon gift in our day, owing to the wide diffusion of historical studies, and the special direction they have taken. Reviews of historical works, as found in our periodicals, often exhibit it in a high degree.

## II.

*Imagination and Memory.*—If the object of the student of history were only to collect facts and testimonies, industry alone would be necessary, with that amount of accuracy which is secured by the exercise of the critical faculty. But history is not a mere register of documents or a dry summary of events. It is a living image of the past; not a hazy semblance, not a bare outline, but a full and true likeness of detail, with that graphic representation of the surroundings which adds so much to the interest of facts, and is often necessary to a proper appreciation of their meaning. To construct such a picture out of data often fragmentary and incoherent is the work of the imagination. But to trace it accurately requires knowledge besides, a knowledge of the people and of the period. It is because this knowledge was missing in mediæval writers, and in modern historians up to a recent period, that their descriptions are so unreal. Just as the older painters were wont to array their figures, Greek, Roman, Jewish, and barbarian alike, in the same conventional drapery, or in the common dress of their contemporaries, so the writers we refer to, whenever they attempt to improve on their

materials, depict events of all kinds, sacred and secular, as if they had occurred in their own time.

Fleury was one of the first to attempt another and truer method. There is much "local color" in his ecclesiastical history, and his little volume, *Mœurs des Israelites et des Chrétiens*, was a wonderful attempt for his time to reconstruct the daily life of the ancient Jews and the early Christians. But it is not so much to him as to secular writers that the new school, "the picturesque school," as it is called, owes its success. Walter Scott, in his historical romances, led the way in England; the French historical school of Thierry, Guizot, Michelet, etc., made it popular all over Europe. For the last forty years an incalculable amount of labor has been expended in unearthing the minutest details of the past, and in reconstructing extinct forms of civilization; with the result that we may now know the habits and life of the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, thousands of years back, as well as we know those of the last century, and that the historian can watch the events and describe the characters of remote periods amid their true surroundings, just as if they were happening in his own time.

It is easy to see of what special value such work is to the student of Church History, antiquity having for him a meaning, doctrinal and practical, it can have for nobody else. Hence we find that our modern works on ecclesiastical history, great or small, aim at supplying him with all manner of particulars on the ideas, habits, institutions, of each period. All these his constructive imagination enables him to build into series of pictures, to place each object in its proper setting, and to see its characters as they lived and moved.

But to have looked into and understood the past would be of little avail if what has been thus seen is not remembered, hence the necessity for the student of history of a good memory. Memory, of course, has a considerable share in all our knowledge, for to know is mostly to remember. But in history its share is greatest, the very substance of the science being held by that faculty. Hence Bacon, in dividing human knowledge according to our faculties, assigns history to memory, philosophy to reason, and poetry to imagination. It is only natural, therefore, that we should find great historians, such as Gibbon and Macaulay, gifted with a prodigious memory of details; whereas the ablest minds devoid of that faculty in any noticeable measure are incapable of handling historical subjects.

Memory varies extremely in its action as well as in the objects it grasps and retains. There is the ready memory, the retentive memory, the accurate memory. There is the memory of words, of thoughts, of things — the memory of leading features, or of multiplied, minute details. What the student of history needs most is a memory retentive and accurate, storing up and holding in readiness facts, dates, particulars, judgments, and appreciations, his own and those of others. Such a memory is chiefly a gift of nature, but in every degree, from the highest to the humblest, it is susceptible of improvement; and this should be no small comfort to those who are tempted to relinquish the study of history because of their inability to retain what they have learnt. The truth is that nobody can remember more than a fraction of what he had once mastered; and, as regards history in particular, while nobody can hope to remember all its details, there is nobody who may not remember much of what is worth retaining. To some the artificial or mnemonic methods of culture are

beneficial; the natural methods are accessible and helpful to all. Thus, concentration of thought on any object impresses it on the memory, and, in general, the clearer, the more vivid, the more frequently repeated impressions are, the surer they are to be remembered. Again, we remember things unfamiliar by connecting them with what we know. The logical ordering of thoughts or of facts is a great help to many, and even those who cannot remember details may always know where to find them, and, in the mean time, have a very distinct and definite impression of the conclusion they have gathered from them, which is, after all, the chief benefit of the study.

### III.

*Love of Truth.* — “It is the law of history,” says Cicero, “to speak the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, without favor or grudge.” *Quis nescit primam esse historię legem ne quid falsi dicere audeat; deinde ne quid veri non audeat; ne qua suspicio gratiæ sit in scribendo, ne qua simultatis?* It is truth that distinguishes history from fiction. Whoever writes history claims to speak the truth, and whoever studies it does so with the expectation, and generally for the purpose, of finding the truth.

Yet it may be safely said that there is no manner of inquiry in which truth is so liable to be disregarded or missed, none in which so many things conspire to mislead the inquirer. Wrong standards, ignorance, passion, prejudice, likings, dislikes, all tend to pervert men’s judgments, and blind them to the most obvious features, sometimes to the reality, of the most unquestionable facts. Extending to persons and things of the past the same feelings of sympathy or antipathy as to what surrounds us, we are all



exposed to view them in the same way, exaggerating, consciously or unconsciously, the qualities of those we like and the faults of those we dislike, or, conversely, hiding from others and from ourselves the faults of the former and the virtues of the latter. Nothing short of constant watchfulness and a firm resolve to be fair to all can preserve the reader or writer from this manner of evil. Church History begets it more easily and entertains it more steadily than secular history, for this reason that the latter, while awakening our interest in a high degree, in most cases leaves the judgment unbiased, whereas our sympathies are aroused by almost everything in ecclesiastical history, the good name, the honor, of the Church being more or less directly associated with all the events in which they had a share, as well as with the lives and actions of her children.

How, then, should the student of history steer an even course and handle facts so as to avoid all reproach of unfairness ?

1. His greatest peril is in dealing with historical characters with which he is out of sympathy. His duties in their regard are substantially the same as if they were his contemporaries.

Here is a man against whom he has a personal grievance, or whose action he considers mischievous or morally wrong. Let him denounce the evil, by all means, if thereby he can stay it ; let him counteract the harmful influence by showing the unworthiness of the agent ; let him ventilate his own grievance in view of obtaining redress. But he may not recklessly assail the character of his opponent ; he should not strive to injure him by false imputations. Deliberate calumny is always a great wrong. Neither should he take up at random, and repeat without scruple, the evil

reports which have reached him, simply because they are effective, for this is only thinly veiled slander. It is no excuse to say that he only repeats what he heard. He has no right to propagate what is hurtful to his fellow-man without at least making sure of its being true. Neither may he, without dishonesty, so manipulate facts, true in themselves, as to produce on the public an incorrect and unfavorable impression of his opponent.

Now, all this is substantially true of the historian, for, although those he speaks of are no longer sensible to what is said of them, yet theologians hold that, in a true sense, they have still a right to their character, and the family to which they belong, their friends and admirers, properly resent any unjust imputation on them.

Sometimes, indeed, the one who deals with historical facts is not a judge, but an advocate. When formally or equivalently acknowledged as such, his business is no longer to produce a correct impression of the facts or characters he has to describe, but to supply truthful elements which, combined with facts presented on the opposite side, will enable the reader to pronounce an equitable sentence.

2. This leads us to ask, in the second place, how far the student is bound to look for, or the historian to set forth, the unfavorable aspects of men or of things.

And here the comparison already resorted to will again serve to guide us. We are certainly not more bound to aim at knowing the whole truth in the past than in the present. Now, what is it we look at or look for around us? Are we concerned to know all about the men we meet, or about current events? By no means. We want to know what is useful, what helps us on; what pleases, charms, rejoices, encourages us; what brings inspiration; what tends to make us happier or better. The rest is

worthless, except as a lesson or as a warning. Let police, judges, and juries, let moralists, look into the darker aspects of society and the misdeeds of individuals; we feel it to be no business of ours, unless in regard to those whose faults it is our duty to correct, or whose moral worth determines the character of our relations with them.

In like manner, those interested in history ordinarily want to know of the past only what is profitable, what teaches, what charms, what inspires. They do not feel bound to see their heroes under every aspect, or to sound events to their very depths, and measure them in all their bearings. Even the historian who ministers to their tastes does not feel himself called upon to do it. He draws pictures; but, like all painters, he idealizes, that is, he drops what is meaningless, and sets aside or subdues the features of the period or of the personage which would mar their beauty. And the result is clearer, more serviceable, easier to conceive and to retain, than if he had undertaken to say everything. In this way, too, historians may, with equal sincerity and a knowledge of the same facts, present two portraits of the same personage, two descriptions of the same period, utterly unlike one another, or having very little in common. An admirer of the Middle Ages will dwell with delight on the faith, the courage, the chivalry, the lofty ideals of the period, while referring but briefly to its dark sides. A detractor, on the contrary, will pass over its bright aspects in silence, or dispose of them in half a dozen lines; but he will devote as many pages to a description of the ignorance, the superstitions, the coarseness, the cruelty, and all the vices of the same epoch. In most characters there is, in ever-varying proportions, a combination of good and evil, — enough evil, apparent or real, to darken the brightest figures; enough of what is lovable to ren-

der attractive, when seen alone, the very worst characters. It is in this way that, without any necessary departure from literal truth, such men as Luther, Calvin, John Knox, Huss, Wycliffe, have been made popular. It was only necessary to emphasize their qualities and to hide their faults.

History written thus is, to say the least, misleading. But can it be written otherwise without losing much of its interest? A historian can hardly do justice to his subject unless he be in some measure in sympathy with it, and, if so, can he be impartial? And if impartial, is not his work liable to be cold and dreary? Those who are one-sided and extreme may prove most useful to whoever wants to get at the truth. They supply the best that can be said in favor of their respective positions, and thereby dispense with further inquiry in that direction, while their admissions on the opposite side may be considered as proven, for otherwise they would not have been made. In other words, they are like advocates before a court of justice, helping, by their very extremeness, judge and jury to reach an equitable decision.

Finally, to know all that can be known on some subjects may not be good for everybody. There may be minds too weak to bear it, or too ill-equipped in the facts and principles which are its necessary counterpoise, or too excitable to see it and to hold it in its true proportions. It is due to such to accommodate things to their capacity, and, without any departure from truth, to set before them only what may be profitable. Truth is the abstract law of history; but, when written for those referred to, judgment and discretion are the law of the historian. It is the principle unhesitatingly followed by those who write secular histories or biographies for the multitude; there is no



reason why it should not be extended to narratives of a religious character.

What is thus supplied to the young, to the ignorant, or to the half-educated, is historical, but it hardly can be called history; for history, as Bacon says, is like a true friend, it neither flatters nor dissembles. This latter is, of course, the only admissible conception of history as a science; it is, furthermore, that to which the modern mind turns in preference to any other. To find ideals, most people nowadays are perfectly satisfied to turn to poetry or to fiction. What they look for in history is the real. They want to know the truth unadulterated, unattenuated, — the whole truth, so far as it can be known, even though it prove disappointing. In this greater knowledge, and in the more equitable judgments that follow upon it, they find a keener and healthier enjoyment than in cherishing delusions born of ignorance. Even the partisan soon discovers that, in the interests of his position, not less than of truth, he has to get at the strong points of his opponents, and, consequently, study questions all round. Least of all should the clerical student persistently close his eyes to unpleasant facts. They bear with them lessons most salutary, though unwelcome. Neither should he, for polemical purposes, unfairly question or minimize them when objected by others. To do so would show that he distrusts his cause, or confesses his inability to defend it honestly. Transparent candor is the best and most appropriate defense of truth, and in the end, like honesty, it proves the best of policy. Consequently there is nothing he should have more at heart than to be fair to his opponents, and, comparing all sides of a question, to do justice to all. In view of this he has to remember that the writers he has chosen for his guides, while professing to follow the maxim

of Quintilian, *Historia scribitur ad narrandum non ad probandum*, in reality are often concerned, perhaps unconsciously, to substantiate a view or to prove a system, to write up or to write down somebody or something, and that, therefore, if he would know the whole truth, the only practical way to reach it is to hear both sides, *Audi et alteram partem*.

## CHAPTER XII.

*THE BIBLE.*

IN each group of sciences there are one or two upon which the others may be said to rest, because they borrow from them laws and principles which are appealed to or implied in all their developments. Thus physics and chemistry underlie all the natural sciences ; astronomy is built on mathematics ; the moral and social sciences rest on the fundamental facts of human nature, as set forth by psychology. And so it is with the various forms of sacred knowledge. They may be all traced back to one main source — the Bible. Theology in every shape — dogmatic, moral, ascetic, mystical — proceeds directly from the Inspired Word, and borrows from it at every step its substance and its form. It is from the Bible that sacred oratory derives its deepest thoughts and most striking utterances ; it is to it even that canon law goes for its most fundamental principles.

Nor is its interests by any means confined to its bearing on religion. To the historian, to the philologist, to the antiquarian, it supplies information of the highest value. To the writer and to the speaker it is the inexhaustible source of literary inspiration. The philosopher is confronted in its pages with the thoughts that have sunk deepest into the souls of men, and most powerfully moved them to action. He remembers that millions of believers have read that book on bended knees, and that some of its

sayings have done more to determine the course and character of events than the greatest productions of genius or the will of the most powerful rulers.

Thus, even from a purely secular point of view, the Bible is, beyond all comparison, the greatest of books, the most deserving, consequently, at all times, to fix the attention of thoughtful minds. As a fact, it has, at all times, enjoyed an importance unapproached by any other book, and unaffected, strange to say, by all the revolutions of human thought. Indeed, we may remark that never was the Bible studied as at the present day. Fervent believers, eager enquirers, doubters, men of action, all seem equally interested in it. More than at any other time has it become the battlefield of religious belief. It is there that the defenders of the faith have to encounter their most formidable enemies.

These facts more than suffice to account for the recent action of Pope Leo XIII., who, by his Encyclical of November, 1893, undertook, to use his own words, "to give an impulse to the noble science of Scripture, and to impart to its study a direction suitable to the needs of the present day." "Let all," he says, "especially the recruits of the ecclesiastical army, understand how deeply the Sacred Books should be esteemed, and with what eagerness and reverence they should approach this great arsenal of heavenly arms." And thereupon he points out in detail the various benefits to be derived from such a study, and the lines on which it should be pursued. But before following in his footsteps, it may be well to look behind us and around us ; to see, in other words, what place the Bible has occupied in the clerical studies of past ages, and what has been done and is being done in our own day for the furtherance of Biblical science.



## ARTICLE I.

*BIBLICAL STUDY, PAST AND PRESENT.*

## I.

The importance of the Bible in the formation of the mind and life of priest and cleric in the early ages of the Church can scarcely be exaggerated. The doctrines of the faith, speculative and practical, which come to us to-day through so many channels, and in such an endless variety of shapes, were conveyed to primitive Christians mainly through the Sacred Scriptures, read in their frequent gatherings, and explained by the presiding priest or bishop. The reading in common of the Sacred Books was originally a Jewish practice; for centuries before Christ came it was the principal object which led the Jews to meet on the Sabbath in their synagogues. From them the custom naturally passed into the Christian assemblies, and already we find S. Paul recommending to his disciple Timothy to be faithful to the practice. "Till I come," he says, "attend *unto reading*, to exhortation, to doctrine."<sup>1</sup> And this is the very order described a hundred years later by S. Justin:<sup>2</sup> "Upon the day called Sunday, all that live either in city or country meet together at the same place, where the writings of the Apostles and Prophets are read, as much as time will give leave. When the reader has done, the bishop makes a sermon, wherein he instructs the people, and animates them to the practice of such beautiful precepts."

Thus already the sermon was nothing but an exposition of some part of the Scriptures which had just been heard,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 13.<sup>2</sup> *Apol. I.*, 87.

and so it continued for ages. It is in this shape that we have most of the commentaries written by the Fathers ; and these cover nearly the whole ground of the Old and New Testaments, thus showing the extent to which the faithful were made acquainted with the Sacred Books. Sunday gatherings would, of course, have been insufficient for the purpose ; but we find that the faithful met much oftener. S. Augustine, in his homilies on S. John, refers several times to the fact that his people came day after day to listen to them ; and the homilies of S. Chrysostom reveal in the Eastern Church a similar condition of things.

Nor was the knowledge of Scriptures confined among the faithful to what was imparted to them in their public meetings. Many of them possessed copies of the Sacred Writings, or portions of them, such as the Psalter, the Gospels, the Epistles of S. Paul, and many others ; and that this was not by any means exceptional we may infer from the fact that the Fathers, in their homilies, frequently exhort their hearers to read the word of God in preference to secular literature.<sup>1</sup> S. Chrysostom speaks of it as a common practice of the faithful, and points out the means of profiting thereby. On one occasion he recommends his hearers to read beforehand the parts of Scripture which he was just then engaged in explaining to them. Indeed, more than once he speaks of the habitual reading of the Scriptures as one of the ordinary duties of the Christian life, not confined to priests or monks, but extending to people engaged in matrimony, and surrounded by the cares of a secular life.<sup>2</sup>

Still more earnestly, as might be expected, was the practice urged upon those who had devoted themselves to a life of piety. "The Scriptures," says S. Jerome, "are the

<sup>1</sup> *Aug., de Vera Relig.*, 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Homil. II. in Math.*

light and life of the soul, its daily nutriment. Who knoweth not the Scriptures knoweth not Christ Himself." As a consequence, to all those devout women who had placed themselves under his guidance, the great doctor invariably recommends the assiduous reading of Scripture, and even the practice of committing to memory a portion of it each day. Nor will his pressing recommendations surprise us if we remember that, in those times, devout souls had little else to turn to for their spiritual sustenance. Most of the beautiful writings by which the teachings of Holy Writ are expanded and accommodated to the various conditions and needs of the Christian soul belong to a subsequent period. Outside the books of the Old and the New Testaments little was known, or at hand, but pagan literature, which, instead of helping, could but hinder the growth of the spiritual life.

In this condition of things, it is easy to imagine of what paramount importance the study of the Bible was felt to be in every degree of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The young clerics, gathered around their bishop, heard him expound it day after day, and were sometimes commissioned, as we see in the case of S. Augustine, to take down the words, or at least the substance, of each discourse, to be afterwards reviewed and published. The bishop, as a teacher and interpreter, was supposed to be familiar with all the Sacred Writings; and in the priest, who occasionally relieved the bishop of his duty, as we read of S. Chrysostom and S. Augustine, or who performed it by delegation in outlying churches, a similar knowledge of the Bible was naturally expected. Hence the well-known advice of S. Jerome to his young disciple Nepotian, *Divinas Scripturas sæpius lege; imo nunquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur*. And so the young priest read and pondered

without cease over the sacred pages, guided in their meaning by the wisdom of his elders and the living traditions of the Church. Nor, indeed, was there any other source from which he could derive knowledge appropriate to his condition. The doctrines of Christianity had not yet been systematized. Theology existed only in its separate and unconnected elements. What we call catechisms, manuals, summaries, expositions of the faith, were still wanting. For those who wished to get a deeper knowledge of the faith, for their own benefit or that of others, only one course remained open: to turn to the Scriptures, and study them diligently and intelligently. Hence the work of S. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, which by its title would lead one to expect in it an outline of Christian belief, simply lays down a series of principles and views by the light of which the Scriptures may be studied with advantage.

Thus, then, the Bible became from the beginning "the Book" of the faithful, and still more of priests, *Liber Sacerdotalis*. And so it remained during all the early ages of the Church. To the lectionaries, or liturgical books in use for the Divine Office, extracts from the acts and letters of the martyrs and from the apostolic writings of Clement, Hermas, etc., were gradually added; but the principal element always consisted in the Old and the New Testament, so that in the course of their most habitual duties the clergy of the period were kept in constant touch with the Sacred Books, and led to a careful study of their most important contents. How assiduously many of them cultivated the opportunity may be gathered from the voluminous collections of letters of S. Augustine, S. Jerome, and many other Greek and Latin Fathers, in reply to the numerous queries on Biblical questions addressed by bishops, priests, and



deacons, that is, by those whose principal duty was the instruction of others.

But all this disappeared before the invasions of the barbarous tribes of northern Europe on one side and of the Saracens on the other. From the fifth to the tenth century they swept like so many devastating torrents over the fair face of Christendom, destroying in their course almost all traces of learning and of discipline. The reign of Charlemagne marked only a temporary subsidence, the work of intellectual renovation, which he originated, disappearing almost entirely with himself. In the monasteries alone, or rather in those among them that escaped the ruthless hand of the destroyer, was the lamp of knowledge kept dimly burning. But there we find the Inspired Word still in its place of honor, diligently studied, lovingly transcribed, and devoutly committed to memory. "The education of the scholars," writes Mme. Drane,<sup>1</sup> "began at a very early age. The first task consisted in learning by heart certain portions of Holy Scripture, and specially of the Psalter. Learning by rote was used more generally than among ourselves, partly because books were rare, and partly because the teachers of old times sought to sanctify this power of the soul by thoroughly informing it with holy words. Besides the Psalter, the novices of a religious house were expected to know the New Testament by heart, half an hour a day being assigned for that purpose."

In his remarkable book on *The Dark Ages*, Dr. Maitland proves by documentary evidence the eagerness with which copies of the Bible were sought after in monasteries, and multiplied by the diligent labor of the monks. By a lengthened extract from the "Customs of Cluny," he shows that in that great monastery nearly the whole Bible was read

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Schools and Scholars*, p. 188.

yearly in the Divine Office, and it is lawful to conclude that a similar usage prevailed in the offshoots of that noble institution. Biblical studies flourished from the beginning in the mendicant orders. The Dominican rule, in particular, directed that each student sent to the university should be provided with three books at least, one of them being a "library," *Bibliotheca*, — as it was still called, — that is, a complete collection of the sacred writings.

But outside university schools and monasteries very little was known of the Bible, or of anything else, especially among the lower ranks of the clergy. The dense cloud of ignorance which had settled upon them after the death of Charlemagne was only very imperfectly dispelled by the great intellectual movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In particular they remained strangers, as a body, to Biblical study, and even to the letter of the Sacred Books. To own a Bible was, all through the Middle Ages, a costly luxury, the privilege, consequently, of very few. Those who enjoyed it were wont to dispose of the treasure by special bequest in their wills, sometimes leaving it to some convent close by a seat of learning, "for the use of poor scholars." It was one of the charities practiced in monasteries to make copies of the Bible, and lend them to poor priests and students. To make sure of their being returned, sometimes a deposit of money was required, or a mortgage given by the priest on his property.

The Bible, then, was known to the bulk of the clergy, not as a whole, but only in an incomplete and fragmentary way. Even in the higher spheres it ceased to be the centre of clerical studies, and this was the direct result of the new movement which gave birth to scholastic theology. Hitherto the doctrines of Christianity, scattered through the Inspired Books and the writings of the Fathers, had

never been set forth in anything like a complete and connected shape. This was to be the work of the early schoolmen. For the first time divine revelation was reduced to logical order, and became a consecutive system. In the twelfth century the great doctrinal synthesis of Petrus Lombardus appeared, and became almost at once the handbook of teachers and students, to be superseded, only long after, by the *Summs* of S. Thomas. The great advantage of the *Sentences* was that they presented to the reader, classified under each subject, those more authoritative passages of Scripture and of the Fathers upon which preceding ages had so much dwelt, and thus made it unnecessary to go back to the originals. In this way, and because logical argument was being largely substituted to authority in the habits of mind of the period, the Bible, while losing nothing of the reverence which was wont to be paid to it, ceased to occupy its former position as a text around which all was gathered. It gradually gave way to the *Sentences* and to Aristotle.

We can hardly suppose that this was the purpose of the great leaders of the scholastic movement, or even a part of their anticipations. They all loved the study of the Bible. It is a remarkable fact that there is scarce one among them whose name is not found appended to some extensive work of Biblical interpretation. Hugh of S. Victor, Petrus Lombardus, Albert the Great, S. Bonaventure, S. Thomas—all these great lights of the period, of whom we are wont to think only as theologians, were almost as well known in their day as commentators of Scripture. But their Scriptural work was soon lost sight of, whilst their theological speculations and methods remained as an inspiration and a guidance to the generations that followed. The Bible continued to be cultivated for devotional pur-

poses ; new commentaries on various parts appeared from time to time ; but the great majority of students, when they sought to interpret the sacred books, were satisfied with the *Glossa Ordinaria*, dating back to the ninth century, or with the short notes of Nicholas de Lyra, published about the year 1320. No real development of Biblical studies appears under the reign of scholasticism. Its methods and its spirit were equally unsuited to such a purpose ; in fact, it may be said that they effectively counteracted the attempt made by the Council of Vienne (1311) to originate a new departure through the study of the Oriental languages.

The era of progress in this department begins with the Renaissance and the Reformation. It is easy to see how these two great movements were destined, each in its own way, to lead to a more intelligent and more popular study of the Bible. The art of printing, recently discovered, placed for the first time the Sacred Books within the reach of all. Even before the Reformation, numerous editions and translations were issued ; and the new religion, which claimed to be built on Scripture alone, could not but lead on all sides to deeper and more thorough methods of Biblical study. With Protestants the Bible naturally resumed its primitive position, the direct study of the Sacred Text almost superseding everything else ; while Catholic scholars, though faithful to their traditional lines of study, unquestionably devoted more time and care to the understanding of the Bible than in the preceding period. It is remarkable that, down to the close of the last century, they put forth as many and as important exegetical and critical works as their opponents, and that the latter can show nothing in that period to compare in thoroughness, depth, or abiding value, with the works of Maldonatus and of Estius ; noth-



ing to surpass in variety and breadth of knowledge the labors of the Benedictine, Dom Calmet.

## II.

The preceding remarks will, we trust, enable the reader to form some conception of what the study of the Bible has been to the cleric and priest in former ages. At the same time they supply a powerful incentive to the pursuit of that same study, by showing how vital it was always held to be by the most enlightened, and how regularly it rose and fell in the Church with the general culture of the clergy.

Another and scarce less effective motive may be found in the wonderful work that has been done within the present age, and which continues to be ardently pursued, in connection with the Sacred Books.

The nineteenth century, now drawing to a close, has been one of extraordinary mental activity. Other ages have produced minds as great, but in no other have there been anything like the same number engaged in intellectual pursuits. Almost every subject that could awaken human curiosity has been explored in turn. Whole regions entirely unknown have been opened up to the human mind, while most of those already familiar have had their boundaries indefinitely enlarged. Prominent among the latter stands the Bible. That Book, which might be thought long since to have yielded up all its secrets, so closely had it been questioned by the brightest minds, age after age, seems to have reserved for our time the revelation of some of its most interesting aspects. Nor can this surprise us when we remember the immense amount of labor that has been consumed upon it within the last hundred years. On no other subject has so

much industry been expended. Almost everywhere through the civilized world students have been busy on it, and the end of the century witnesses no relaxation of the work. Germany alone continues to supply a whole army of Biblical students, and the share of England, France, America, and other progressive countries is steadily on the increase. Nor does their work consist, as often in the past, in ascertaining what had been said before them, and repeating it. It is mainly original, based on the observation of facts, and carried out on scientific principles. It is, besides, special, confined generally for each one to a narrow sphere, thus by the division of labor securing in the workman a fitness, and in his work a thoroughness, which could not be attained by the older methods. Hence we may say without exaggeration that in the present age more has been done for the elucidation of the Bible than in all preceding ages put together.

In presence of such prodigious activity expended on the cultivation of a field which is the proper domain of cleric and priest, surely we cannot resign ourselves to stand by and wait with folded arms ; still less may we turn aside and forget the gravity of the issues to which the efforts of the explorers may lead, according as they are well or ill directed. To this we will come back later on. Meanwhile it will not be out of place to say something about the kind of work which has been done in the present age in connection with the subject before us.

1. One of the first conditions for the thorough intelligence of a book is to understand, not merely the language in which we find it, but also the language in which it was originally written ; for while the poorest translation gives the substance of a work, the very best may contain inaccuracies, and always fails to convey the full meaning of the

original. This is why, at all times, a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was deemed a part of the full equipment of the Biblical scholar. Nor was it ordinarily wanting in the last ages. But even in the ablest Greek and Hebrew scholars it left much to be desired. The Greek of the New Testament is not the classical Greek. It is a dialect, to be studied minutely and carefully in its various products, notably in the Septuagint, in order to ascertain the true meanings of its vocabulary. The Hebrew text, in turn, has many obscure and ambiguous terms and constructions. But Hebrew was only one of the Semitic family of languages, and it was noticed that a knowledge of the others helped to dispel many of the difficulties accumulated in the original text of the Old Testament. Hence a new and more profitable field of exploration opened up in our age, to which we owe, among other benefits, grammars and lexicons of Hebrew and New Testament Greek, incomparably superior to any product of former times.

2. The Bible, divinely inspired in all its parts, bears also, in all its parts, the unmistakable impress of its human origin. It reflects the thoughts, the feelings, the aspirations, the genius, in a word, of the people from which it sprang, and supplies the elements of a detailed comparison between the children of Israel and their contemporaries. Again, the Bible is largely historical, with numberless references to places situated inside or outside the promised land, and to facts which concern the surrounding nations as well as the chosen people. To become acquainted with all these places; to see them as they stood out before the eye or the mind of historian and prophet; to follow the children of Jacob in their wanderings through the desert; to watch their progress in the conquest of Palestine; to follow them into exile; and, centuries later, to walk in the

footsteps of the divine Master Himself as he scatters the seed of the Word through Judæa and Galilee, or of His chosen Apostle Paul in his wide missionary activity, — all this is clearly necessary for the full intelligence of the sacred narrative. Scarcely less essential is a knowledge of the physical geography of Palestine and of the surrounding countries, — their climate, their mountains, their rivers, their plains. The need of such knowledge was always felt, but only in our age has it been abundantly supplied. Within the present century the whole area of Bible lands has been explored by hundreds of travelers, and so vividly described that we seem now to know them as well as we know our native country. Various associations have been formed for the same purpose. We may mention in particular the *Palestine Exploration Society*, established in 1865 to prosecute by the most approved methods of direct investigation researches of all kinds connected with the Holy Land. Ever since, it has been busy in its task of surveying, excavating, locating places of which Scripture has retained often only the memory and the name. Underneath the accumulated *débris* of ages it has rediscovered the original lines on which Jerusalem stood under Herod, when Christ walked its streets, and far back in the days of Solomon and David. East and west of Jordan it has examined and described most places of interest, so that through its efforts and those of individual explorers, there is scarce a single historic spot with which the general reader may not become acquainted.

3. Investigations still more elaborate and with results more striking have been carried out from a much earlier date, and are still pursued by governments, associations, and individual explorers in the neighboring land of Egypt. Egypt, as we know, was the cradle of the Jewish people ;



her civilization impressed itself upon them during their slow growth into a nation ; her history flowed on for ages side by side with theirs, the two streams often mingling together. What a vivid light would that history and that civilization cast on the pages of the Bible if only they could be known ! But for nearly two thousand years they had been wrapped in mystery. With her undecipherable inscriptions and strange pictures of manners and life long forgotten, Egypt lay half buried in her sands, an enigma which successive generations strove in vain to solve. With the present century the answer came at last. The monuments of a wonderful civilization were brought to light ; a key was found to the mysterious writings on their walls, and a picture arose, bright, distinct, and with wondrous detail, of what that strange people had been for ages. And to the great joy of the believer, at every step features were discovered confirming or illustrating the facts of the Bible.

4. A last field of wide extent remained to be explored : the land from which Abraham had been first led forth, and to which, after many centuries, his descendants were brought back in captivity, — Chaldea, Assyria, Nineveh, Babylon, cities, empires, civilization, closely allied with Jewish history, and even with some of the features of the Jewish religion. And here, again, a rich harvest awaited the explorer and the Bible scholar. It is not within our province to enter into particulars, nor is it necessary. Everybody has heard and read of the wonderful things that have been unearthed in the excavations practiced in various parts of those ancient countries, a great and long-forgotten past, with its language, its history, and its arts.

5. Results no less interesting for Biblical scholars have

been reached by another kind of exploration, that of the old manuscripts of the Bible; a work diligently and successfully pursued in preceding ages, but to which the present has brought the most valuable additional materials, with a critical tact more refined and far-reaching than at any other period. And the outcome of all this labor, sifted, freed from technicalities, is brought within the reach of the ordinary student, and presented in the most engaging forms. Research, travel, excavations, deciphering, descriptions of places and of manners, come to us, each with its own special interest, and all together lighting up some obscure corner or unnoticed detail of Holy Writ, and transforming the duty of Biblical study into a most enjoyable occupation of mind.

Thus equipped, as Bible students had never been before, those of the present age have come in countless numbers, crowding every vacant spot, viewing the Sacred Books under every aspect, devoting to each of the Sacred Writings the minutest and most exhaustive care. The elucidation of a single book, sometimes of a single question, becomes the work of a lifetime. Hundreds of points, unnoticed before, are remarked and investigated. Nothing escapes the trained eye of the investigator. But, far from reaching the end, the most clear-sighted are ever discovering more problems than they can attempt to solve. Catholic schools and scholars have not remained strangers to the work, yet it must be confessed that most of it has been, and is, carried on outside the Catholic Church. The present differs considerably in this regard from past ages. To a certain extent it may be acceptable and justifiable, as we shall see later on. But at no time should it be forgotten that to the Church and her children have the Sacred Scriptures been entrusted, and that the mission of guarding or of

interpreting them cannot with propriety or safety be left to scholars wedded to erroneous doctrines or to total unbelievers.

## ARTICLE II.

### *THE TRAINING IN BIBLE STUDIES.*

From the succinct view just set before the reader it is clear that in every Christian age the Bible was justly regarded as the primary source of all sacred knowledge, appealed to almost exclusively for many centuries, and never lost sight of, even after its teachings had been cast in the scientific forms of theology; that the intellectual value of individuals and of periods in the past might be ordinarily measured by their knowledge of the Bible; that in our time the Sacred Books have awakened an interest and led to an amount of intelligent and laborious investigation never witnessed before, and with results such that more than ever the clergy is bound not to lose sight of them, but rather to take their share in the work, and, if possible, to guide it.

But the performance of such a duty implies a proper initiation. A Bible student needs to be trained, as well as a student of theology, of history, or of sacred oratory; and this training forms no inconsiderable part of the work of our seminaries. We have now to consider how it may be done.

The aspirant who enters a seminary is generally less acquainted with the Bible than a young Protestant in similar circumstances, his religious education being based, not on the Sacred Text, as is the case with the latter, but on the catechism duly developed. Yet he is not an entire stranger

to the Sacred Books. He knows at least something of the Gospels, something of Old Testament history. He has read, in his literary studies, beautiful passages from the Prophets; he has heard or come across numberless Biblical quotations. But all that is incomplete and incoherent. What he needs is a consecutive, scientific knowledge, a closer acquaintance with what is more practically useful, and with it a correct view of Biblical science as a whole, sufficiently broad to comprise future as well as present work, with foundations solid enough to sustain the superstructure of ever growing knowledge.

Two kinds of work are necessary for such a purpose, one personal and private, the other under the guidance of a teacher.

#### I.

First of all, it is by private work that the student gets that initial acquaintance with the Sacred Text which is implied in all subsequent study. It matters little how or where he begins. The Bible is not, properly speaking, a book; it is a literature, a collection of writings spreading over a period of fifteen hundred years, — narratives, poems, proverbs, sacred songs, letters, prophecies, parables, legislative enactments, — which may be taken up almost anywhere, as is done in regard to every other literature; although, from a chronological, or a logical, or a practical, point of view, there are courses which are visibly preferable to others. This first survey should be of a rapid kind, just sufficient to get a general impression of each book and of its contents, and an initial view of the Sacred Books as a whole.

A second and more careful reading should follow, being confined to the most important books, and pursued with the object of getting a firmer hold of them. It is at that



stage that, for the first time, extraneous help will become desirable, in the shape of a short "Introduction" to each one of the books taken up, pointing out its origin, its purpose, and its principal features. If the student could gather this information from the Sacred Book itself, it would be better still. But, even in such case, he will always do well to place his observations side by side with those of the Introduction, and so correct and complete the former by the latter. If, as is likely, he finds it easier and pleasanter to begin by reading his Introduction, he should read it over a second time after getting through the book he is engaged upon, to make sure that he has found in it all the Introduction had led him to expect. Almost any of our books of introduction — *Dixon, Vigouroux, Cornely, Lami, Ubaldi*, and quite recently *Dr. Breen*; or even the Oxford and Cambridge Manuals (*Helps to the Study of the Bible, Cambridge Companion to the Bible*) — will serve equally well the present purpose. In this second reading of the Bible, what serves most is the attention and reflection of the reader. The Sacred Writings are not different in that regard from any other books. The more thoroughly one enters into them, clearly the more he will get out of them. To secure attention and reflection, the most ordinary methods are the most effective. There is, first, the practice of marking the text in some clear and distinct manner that catches the eye and impresses itself on the memory. The reader may, for example, stroke, as he goes along, interlinearly or marginally, first, actions, thoughts, expressions beautiful or striking; secondly, facts or circumstances which seem inexplicable or strange; thirdly, passages which are obscure or unintelligible. Each category should have its distinctive mark, and it is easy to see how much attention and thought will be requisite to apply them judiciously.

In the next place, the student should write, as he proceeds, short notes embodying the chief remarks he has made, and the reflections worth remembering which have been awakened in his mind. Thus he should, first, set down the questions of importance that occur to him and that he is unable to solve; secondly, he should record his remarks on each chapter or section; and thirdly, still more on each book when he has got to the end of it. These remarks may be very crude and even injudicious. But, though worthless to anybody else, they are always valuable to the writer, in so far as they have led him to think, and have opened his mind to a more accurate or deeper conception of things connected with the subject of his study when it comes to be set before him.

We shall have more to say later on of the private work of the Biblical student; but from now we wish to emphasize the fact that it cannot begin too soon nor be kept up too steadily; neither can the teacher do any greater service to those under his care than by initiating them into the right way of taking it up, and by making sure that they remain faithful to it. We have reasons to fear that a great deal of time is lost by beginners, and perhaps by others, in what we might call a passive perusal of the Bible, without any definite aim or positive effort.

## II.

The mission of the teacher, then, is first of all to guide by suggestion and by supervision the personal work of the student at every stage. It is, next, to convey to him a certain amount of accurate and useful information which unaided he could hardly attain to. It is, lastly, to open up before him the lines of subsequent study, and so awaken

his curiosity and stir up his soul that he will faithfully and even eagerly pursue in later years the work begun in the seminary. It is obvious that only a man who has devoted years of close study to all the leading aspects of the Bible can give such a manner of initiation. A time was when the elementary teaching of Scripture implied little preparation and no special fitness. But that time is past, and henceforth only trained specialists can attempt it with any hope of success.

And, as the level of Biblical studies is raised, more time has to be devoted to them. The lectures — varying from two to five a week — should extend over the four or five years of the seminary course, and this is none too much if we consider the amount of ground to be covered.

As regards the order to be followed, it must largely depend on the condition and circumstances of the students, as well as on the individual taste and preparation of the professor. Yet there is such a thing as a normal order, based on the nature of the subject, which should not be departed from without reason.

Logically, the questions of introduction should come first. But, while some of them are accessible from the beginning, the most important, to be fully understood and appreciated, require a knowledge of particulars and an amount of reflection which can be expected only at a later period. We refer, of course, to the questions of general introduction; those referring to each book in particular are naturally to be taken up with the book itself. Many, indeed, of the latter are so closely interwoven with one another and connected with the general principles, that it is almost impossible to keep them asunder. As to the general principles themselves, their import is to be gathered chiefly from the individual cases in which they find

their application ; they, consequently, come up again and again to be studied in their various connections, with the result of leaving each time a more accurate conception of their true measure and meaning.

It is among the questions of introduction that are to be found most of the Biblical problems of the day — the origin, the true character, the date, inspiration, textual value, etc., of the various books ; and the question naturally arises, how far they should be made a subject of discussion at any time in an elementary course.

There are extreme views on the subject. Some, struck by the evil following on the investigation of such questions, would have them almost entirely kept out of sight. Others, impressed by the fact that these are the live questions of the day, regarding which the priest is liable at any time to be interrogated, would have him give his chief care to them.

The truth, as usual, lies in a middle course. It is inadmissible, on the one side, that the future defender of the true faith should be left in ignorance of the weak or threatened points of the position he holds. He cannot be expected to deal off-hand with difficulties he never heard of before ; neither is it proper that his information on such subjects, even if he is not compelled to discuss them, should be dependent on chance, or on the imperfect and often inaccurate information which he might derive from his intercourse with books picked up at random, or with men only a little less ignorant than himself. On the other hand, a special study of these more difficult problems, so much dwelt upon in our time, would be decidedly out of place. The beginner has neither the maturity of mind nor the knowledge of facts which would enable him to form a personal judgment on the points at issue ; he would soon lose



his way amid the endless complexity of views and theories, and the final result would be a helpless confusion of thought, and, it might be, the unsettling of his most fundamental convictions. What he needs is a general conception, clear and accurate, though limited, of the work that has been and is being done on and around the Bible ; of the principal views that have been held in succession regarding it, and especially of those that are presently in the ascendant. It is not the time to discuss them ; but their value will be sufficiently determined by the positive teaching of the master, which, like all that is elementary, should be mainly traditional and conservative.

### III.

The Bible is chiefly a record of God's dealings with mankind. Several of its books are purely historical, and the historic element pervades most of the others, forming one of the chief links that bind them together and give them unity. It is, furthermore, what is easiest to understand, and what helps most effectively to understand the rest. The best way, consequently, to take hold of the Bible is to begin by a careful study of Old and New Testament history.

The aim of the former (Old Testament history) would be to get as full and accurate a knowledge as possible of the Jewish people : first, the facts of their tribal and national life, from Abraham to Christ — in Egypt, in the desert, in the promised land, in their dispersion, under and after the captivity, in their subjugation to the Persians, to the Greeks, to the Romans ; next, the history of the surrounding peoples, with which that of the Jews is constantly interwoven, and without which it cannot be well under-

stood ; lastly, a view of their national and racial characteristics, of their manners, their notions, their aspirations and beliefs. All these are the constituent elements, as it were, of the soil in which their religion was divinely planted, and from which their Sacred Books arose. Once understood, they account for numberless special features of the Sacred Writings, and light up details which without them would remain utterly unintelligible.

The same may be said of the geography and topography of Palestine, and, in general, of the Bible lands. Without their help, the sacred narrative conveys but a vague and confusing impression of the facts. The wanderings of the patriarchs, the exodus of Israel, the conquest and division of the promised land, the various political fortunes of the chosen people, become distinctly conceivable only through a knowledge of ancient geography. The physical geography of Judea and Galilee helps greatly to understand the life of our Lord, and even many of His lessons ; while the work of S. Paul, from beginning to end, can be realized only when seen in its historical and geographical setting.

It follows that no instructor in Biblical knowledge should rest content until his scholars are able to locate at once every historic spot, so far as known, in the Holy Land and in the adjacent countries, its distance from Jerusalem and from other centres, etc. He should also make them familiar with the physical aspects, the climate, the products, of Palestine from north to south, etc.

This kind of information forms part of the general introduction ; but, being the natural auxiliary of history, it takes its place as part of it, and is one of those subjects which can without difficulty be taken up from the beginning.

As regards the other questions, such as the canon of the Sacred Books, their language, versions, laws of interpretation, etc., they will have to be treated with care later on; and the longer they are deferred the better they will be understood by the student.

#### IV.

We now come to the study of the individual books of the Old and New Testaments. Obviously a choice has to be made among them, as they are of very unequal importance, and there is not room for a detailed study of all.

The New Testament naturally comes first, and in the New Testament the Gospels.

1. The Gospels are mainly historical, and are supposed to have been already investigated under that aspect. But they contain at the same time the highest and holiest truths of divine revelation. A priest is the preacher of all divine truth, but he is above all a preacher of the Gospel. There is, consequently, no part of Sacred Writ he should know so well, and of this knowledge, familiar and deep, the foundations have to be laid in the seminary course. How this may best be done is a question to be solved by each instructor for himself. He may take up, for instance, the leading doctrines of the Gospel in themselves, and follow them out in succession through its different parts; or he may trace back their antecedents in the Old Testament, and watch them as they expand in the writings of the Apostles and in the life of the early Church; or, again, he may consider them in the light of their adaptation to the abiding needs of human nature, or to the special needs of the present day. Certain more salient parts of the Gospels, such as the miracles, the parables, the Sermon on

the Mount, and other discourses of Our Lord, might also be chosen, and become the centre around which most of the other teachings of the Gospel could be gathered. But a consecutive explanation of any of the Gospels could hardly answer the present purpose. An elementary course cannot be a simple commentary.

2. A similar difficulty occurs in connection with the other writings of the New Testament. Some sort of introduction has to be given to each one of them, but there is no time to study them in detail. Even the Epistles of S. Paul cannot be followed out consecutively, and hence the common practice of selecting the more important among them for class work and leaving the others for private study. There is much to say in favor of such a method; yet it is beset with a twofold danger,—that of limiting practically the knowledge of S. Paul to the Epistles explained, and the knowledge of such Epistles to a discussion of their difficulties. Both may be averted by a careful introduction to the life and genius of the Apostle, and to each one of his writings. Something more effective still would be to substitute to the exegetical study of a few Epistles a thorough inquiry into the principal teachings of S. Paul, illustrated by passages taken indiscriminately from all his Epistles.

3. In the Old Testament (the historical books being already disposed of) what has always appealed most to the Christian mind is the Psalter. Upon the priest that wonderful collection of sacred hymns has a special claim, as supplying a considerable portion of his accustomed homage of prayer and of praise. Daily recitation of the Breviary renders him familiar with the letter of the Psalms; careful study should make him not less acquainted with their meaning and their spirit. His teacher cannot, of course,



be expected to take them up, one after the other. The most and best he can do is to give a key to them in the shape of an introduction, bearing on their origin, compilation, etc., and on their leading aspects, doctrinal, devotional, literary, prophetic, all illustrated by examples gathered from every part of the Psalter.

4. Room has also to be made for the Prophets. Their place is too great in the religious, political, and literary history of the chosen people to admit of their being neglected. At least a general study should be devoted to them, describing the exact nature and purposes of their mission, the part they played in the religious education of Israel, and the character of the books which bear their names.

5. Finally, the Sapiential Books should not be neglected. They form no small portion of Sacred Writ. They reflect the thoughts of the wisest among the Jewish people, and help us to realize what God was pleased to show them of higher truth. They mark a special stage in that gradual evolution of moral and religious knowledge ever growing among the chosen people until it reached its fullness in the teachings of Christ. But the professor can do little more than supply a general introduction to the study.

## V.

Such we conceive to be the extent of the ground which an instructor in Biblical science may find it possible to cover amid the various studies comprised in the seminary training. As in all else that is done in that period, the object of the work should be twofold; to assure a certain amount of necessary knowledge in the present, and, by awakening the curiosity of the aspirants and by developing

their aptitude for Biblical study, to prepare them for subsequent efforts in the same direction. To effect both, and especially the latter, we venture to make the following recommendations :—

1. It should be the constant aim of the professor to elicit from each student as much personal work as his capacity, or the time he can dispose of, may permit, to be pursued substantially on the lines already marked out. Let us suppose, for instance, that the subject of study is the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The student should be induced to go over it several times by himself, and note down in succession, —

- a.* The general purpose or purposes of the Epistle so far as they may be gathered from the text;
- b.* Its principal parts or divisions ;
- c.* Its most striking passages ;
- d.* Its chief difficulties, of expression or otherwise ;
- e.* An attempt to solve them without external help from commentaries.

Questions corresponding to these different points of view should be answered in class, *viva voce* or in writing, having been given out beforehand v.g., in this shape, —

- a.* What is the purpose (manifold) of First Corinthians as gathered from its contents? Mention the passages from which the purpose is inferred.
- b.* Point out the six most striking passages of the Epistle.
- c.* Indicate its most important doctrines — its principal moral lessons.

It is easy to see how questions of this kind, taken up in succession, will absolutely compel the student to a close, repeated perusal of the Epistle, awaken his mind to its principal bearings, and prepare him, in the best possible

way, for the further instruction which the professor intends to impart. It may, indeed, be objected that such a preparation would require more time and more maturity of mind than can be commonly brought to it; but we confess our inability to believe that it is so. Certainly a student incapable of doing that sort of work, after being shown how it is done, is unfit to study philosophy or theology. And, as regards the time, we will simply remark (*a*) that more time will have to be given to Biblical studies than in the past; (*b*) that what is needed is not so much additional time as concentration, method, and a possibility of spending, when needed, more time together on certain questions. For it must be remembered that, while many kinds of work can be pursued amid a variety of interruptions, others demand lengthened, consecutive attention. A distinct view of the purpose and salient points of a book, for example, can hardly be got without going over it in a single sitting.

2. While thus calling forth the powers of the student, and accustoming him to find out things for himself, the professor has to introduce him gradually to an intelligent use of books.

Books without number have been written on the Bible, as a whole, and on its every aspect and every part, so that it would seem as if there was room for nothing more. And yet each year supplies a fresh harvest of Biblical studies, many, as might be expected, of small or transient value, but many more offering original and useful elements, or a happier presentation of what was already known. It is important that the student should be made directly acquainted with what is best in the older and in the more modern productions on the subject. First, there are the Manuals or Introductions. Those in use among Catholics

have been referred to above. They are comparatively few compared with those in use outside the Church; but they suffice abundantly to meet the requirements of the case, and, besides, they may be supplemented by the others, the spirit and orthodoxy of several among them being almost faultless. The student should have one or several of these manuals always at hand. They will serve a threefold purpose: (*a*) to supply various kinds of information he constantly needs; (*b*) to test the accuracy of the conclusions he has reached by his own industry; (*c*) to recall, and occasionally to supplement, the teaching of his professor. The more familiar a student becomes with the contents of his manual, the easier and pleasanter the rest of his work will come to him.

Next, there are the Commentaries. Commentaries serve nearly the same purposes as introductions or manuals. Only the shorter ones can be of much practical benefit to the beginner. Yet it is occasionally useful for present investigation to look into the greater ones, and, in view of future studies, it is desirable that they should be known otherwise than by hearsay. One always thinks more readily of, and takes up more confidently, a work he has already handled.

Lastly, there are the Books of Reference, — works of all kinds bearing directly or indirectly on the Bible, and lighting up its dark or distant parts; works of history, of exploration, of travel, written in view of the Bible, or for other purposes, yet helping none the less effectively to understand some of its facts or features. In this latter shape the present age has added much to Biblical literature, and the student should not be left in ignorance of what is best and most helpful. His present work will be brightened up thereby, and a curiosity awakened which will lead him



to continue in subsequent years what was thus so pleasantly begun.<sup>1</sup>

3. A last means of developing a knowledge of the Bible remains to be mentioned. It consists in giving special opportunities of study and special care to those who reveal a peculiar fitness for that branch of learning. After a short experience of his scholars, the professor will not fail to observe a certain number — it may be only a few — who exhibit a special aptitude for Biblical studies, a general love of the Bible and of things appertaining to it, such as ancient history, antiquities, languages, etc. These are the Bible students of the future, and from now they have to be equipped for it. Thus, besides the rudiments of Hebrew,

<sup>1</sup> We give here the names of a certain number of books which will be found equally interesting and helpful to beginners and to advanced students: —

ABBÉ VIGOUROUX: *La Bible et les Découvertes Modernes*. (Many French editions, — a German translation.)

H. A. HARPER: *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*.

GEIKIE: *The Bible Lands. Hours with the Bible*. (Harper and Geikie follow closely on the lines of Vigouroux.)

THOMSON: *The Land and the Book*.

VAN LENNEP: *Bible Lands*.

CONDER: *Handbook to the Bible. Tent Work in Palestine*.

PALMER: *The Desert of the Exodus. The Negeb*.

PORTER: *Five Years in Damascus. A Guide Book of Syria and Palestine*, etc.

STANLEY: *Sinai and Palestine. Lectures on the Jewish Church*.

WILKINSON: *The Ancient Egyptians*.

LANE: *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*.

RAWLINSON (CANON GEO.): *The Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World. Egypt and Babylon*, etc.

LAYARD: *Nineveh and its Remains. Babylon and Nineveh*.

GEO. SMITH: *Assyrian Discoveries*.

VICTOR GUÉRIN: *La Terre Sainte*.

SAYCE: *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*.

REV. H. J. HEUSER: *Chapters on Bible Study*, etc.

which all are supposed to learn, (*a*) they might be more thoroughly grounded in Hebrew grammar, and get some initiation, if possible, into the other Semitic languages; (*b*) a fuller knowledge might be given them of the modern methods of investigation, v.g., in textual and higher criticism; (*c*) they should also be introduced to some of the latest, best ascertained, and most interesting results reached by the application of these methods; (*d*) occasions should be found to make them do a little original work of the kind with which they have thus become acquainted. To have worked under a master on a few subjects properly selected will enable the student to handle judiciously many others when he meets them later on, and teach him where to look for the most reliable and helpful information.

To accomplish this, nothing can be better than to form the students to whom we refer into a special association similar to those which are known in European schools under the name of "Academies" or "Seminären." These organizations are established in connection with each branch of study, their object being chiefly to train students to original work under the guidance of a master. They are better suited for universities than for seminaries; yet there is unquestionably room for them in the latter, and, properly conducted, they would prove the most effective stimulant to personal effort, and the best training for the work of future years, of which it remains for us to speak in the following articles.

### ARTICLE III.

#### LATER BIBLICAL STUDY.

A course of Biblical studies such as we have just outlined will suffice, if diligently pursued, to supply the newly

ordained priest with a knowledge of what is most essential. It will have laid in him at the same time the foundation for subsequent studies, and, as a rule, awakened a desire to pursue them. The little he has learnt will serve principally to show him how much he has still to learn; and, as he ascends the mountain, the scene will widen before his eyes, and the country to be explored will look at every step more attractive and more beautiful. The study of the Bible, once fairly started, never becomes wearisome; like history, like nature, like the human soul, its interest is inexhaustible and its problems endless.

This fuller mastery of Biblical knowledge will naturally be pursued on the lines laid down in the seminary course. The young clerics' Biblical apparatus will gradually be enlarged and improved. The historical background of the Bible, as revealed through recent exploration and discovery, will be made more distinct and accurate. The land in which the Saviour lived and taught; the people with whom he mingled; their customs, their habits, and their peculiarities, preserved to the present day, — will become more familiar to him, and light up every page of the Gospel. Parts of the Bible barely touched before will be taken up in turn, and closely investigated. The Prophets, the Sapiential Books, the Gospel still more, and S. Paul, will call for a deeper and more thorough study. New aspects, new problems, will arise before him, each having its special attractions. He will have to choose among them, the choice being mainly determined by his personal tastes and circumstances.

Now, there are a few leading directions, some or all of which it is both likely and desirable he should follow, and which consequently call for some special remarks. To state them briefly, it may be said that, for a priest engaged

in the ministry, the study of the Bible may be literary, or devotional, or doctrinal, or apologetic. We propose to deal in the present paper with the first three only.

## I.

By the literary study of the Bible we must not be understood to mean a critical survey, such as is occasionally made of different parts of the Bible, with a view of classifying and judging them by literary standards; neither do we refer to what is called the "literary methods" of solving difficult problems, such as the age or author of certain books. We simply mean, studying the Bible as it is studied by literary men, for the purpose of enjoying its beauties, and imbibing its marvelous power of expression.

It is a remarkable fact that, ever since literature has emancipated itself from the thralldom of conventional rules and purely classical models, the Bible has been considered, on all sides, as the richest known source of literary inspiration. As a consequence, irrespective of its religious contents, it has been assiduously read and studied by the greatest orators and writers of the last three centuries. And if we ask them what has led them thus to a book seemingly so foreign to their purpose, they will tell us that they find in it more original literary beauty than anywhere else; that the Bible narratives, for instance, are more exquisitely simple and true to nature, the poetry of the Psalms more airy and graceful in touch; that Job is more solemn and sublime, the Prophets more vehement and irresistible in their denunciations, more tender in their appeals, the Gospels, finally, and the Epistles more startling, and, at the same time, more touching, more persuasive in their varying tones, than any other literary productions.



But if, even for what we may call secular purposes, the study of the Bible is thus helpful, how much more so when, as is commonly the case with a priest, the object is to convey religious truth in the most forcible manner? Viewed in this light, a familiar acquaintance with the Bible is simply invaluable. The sacred orator who would give Christian devotional thought and feeling their most vivid and touching expression must go back for it to the Sacred Text. There will he find echoed all the voices of the soul, its joys, its sorrows, its hopes, its fears, all there is in it of faith, of trust, of penitence, of love. For directness, for fullness and variety of meaning, what can compare with the recorded sayings of our Lord in the Gospel? For tenderness of accent, for power of exhortation, for appeals that go to the very depths of the soul, who, after the divine Master, can compare with S. Paul? If the preacher would illustrate by example, where can he find anything more apposite and with such a happy combination of dignity and simplicity as the narratives of Sacred Writ, around which, besides, time has gathered associations so sweet and so holy that one can scarce touch them without awakening responsive echoes in others of what in them is deepest, and purest, and best.

The young priest is alive to all this. He feels that he cannot neglect the Bible without depriving himself, as a speaker, of his greatest help. To become every day more familiar with the Sacred Text is his constant aim. Like S. Augustine, he realizes that his growth in this direction is the measure of his proficiency as a messenger of divine truth. *Sapienter autem dicet magis vel minus, quanto in Scripturis Sanctis magis minusve profecit.*<sup>1</sup> He remembers, too, how the Bible has been at all times the principal inspi-

<sup>1</sup> *De Doctr. Christ.*

ration of great preachers; how S. Chrysostom explained whole books of it to his people; how S. Augustine grudged the time he was compelled to give to other studies; how S. Bernard had made himself so familiar with it that he seems almost to have read no other book, and to know no other language. Nor has it been otherwise with modern sacred orators. Bossuet, the greatest of all, knew almost all the Bible by heart. A copy of it accompanied him wherever he went. It filled his vacant hours, and he seldom needed any help outside it to produce his immortal orations.

It is not merely richness and beauty of expression that the speaker borrows from familiarity with the Bible; it is something greater and more effective still, — power, what gives impact to the spoken word. Thought is a weapon, and style gives it its temper and edge; but only the vigorous thrust can make it formidable to the enemy. This power may be added to words in many ways. It may come from the conviction or earnestness of the speaker, or, perhaps, from the weight of his personal character. But there is something which goes beyond personal character and personal conviction. It is the ratification that comes from above, and, in the speaker, that sense of a higher mission which permits him, like the prophets of old, to echo the words of God Himself, *hæc dicit Dominus*. And this is just what the language of the Scriptures gives to the speaker, — weight, authority. Of himself he may have little of either; if still young, he has next to none. But if he delivers the thought of God, in the name of God, and in the words of God, then his personality is lost in the sacredness of his message, and he has to be listened to. As S. Augustine graphically puts it, *Non valet : hæc ego dico — hæc tu dicis — hæc ille dicit ; sed, hæc dicit Dominus*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Vincent.*

A familiar knowledge of the Sacred Text can alone secure these advantages; and that can be reached only by constant reading, — attentive, thoughtful reading, — with pen or pencil in hand, to mark, or to copy, or to annotate, whatever strikes the mind as of special value. In an age like ours, in which so many new and interesting books contend for a share of men's attention, there are very few that secure a second reading. Yet it is characteristic of the most cultured minds that they love to go back to some favorite books, and to read them over and over again, ever finding in them fresh beauties with increased delight. What Shakespeare, or Virgil, or Dante, or Walter Scott is for the man of the world, the Bible should be for the priest. The Church herself imposes upon him the duty of reading a portion of the Sacred Books every day, as a part of the Divine Office; but what he does thus, though most beneficial, is evidently too limited and too rapidly got through to procure the desired effect. On the other hand, the perusal to which we here refer is something different from the deeper study to be spoken of later on. It does not, as a rule, imply the use of a commentary; for only what is intelligible at first sight awakens the imagination and moves the soul.

## II.

The same may be said of the devotional study of the Bible.

This manner of study, as its very name indicates, has for its purpose to convey the Inspired Word to the soul as a spiritual nutriment. Divine truth comes to the Catholic in many ways; through the teachings and the practices of the Church, through the writings of the Fathers, through the traditions of the spiritual life handed down by ascetic

writers, and illustrated by the lives of the saints. But if, ascending from reservoir and channel, he would slake his thirst for spiritual doctrine at the fountain-head, he must go back to the Bible. There is the living spring from which councils, and popes, and Fathers, and saints have almost exclusively drawn those vivifying truths which have been the strength and the life of the world for ages. And to it men turn to-day with as much eagerness as ever. After the exciting but disappointing draughts of human wisdom, even the philosopher finds its waters soothing and sweet; while in it the Christian soul discovers the hidden gift of which our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, "a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting."

And, like water that bubbles up from the bosom of the earth, it flows freely and without stint, ever near at hand, and available without effort. Indeed, the devotional reading of the Sacred Books can hardly be called a study; it is rather the breathing of a heavenly atmosphere, a contemplation, a spontaneous opening of the soul to the light that comes from above. For the devout reader of the Bible there are no difficulties, no problems. Questions of origin, of authorship, of textual and higher criticism, have no existence. The human element of the Scriptures vanishes, as it were, laying bare the divine, and setting the reader, like Moses on the mountain, in the dread presence of God Himself. In the Sacred Book he simply sees God's word — "a letter," as the Fathers were wont to say, "addressed from heaven to earth," instructing him in what he most desires and needs to know, — the end and the law of life, the true measure of all that is on earth and in heaven. He is not particular as to where he opens it, nor is he curious to find in it the order and consecutiveness of human teaching, for in every page, in every line almost,



he finds some salutary lesson. The facts of Sacred Scripture have all a meaning for him; the appeals of the Prophet or of the Apostle to their contemporaries go straight to his heart. Above all, the many-sided, far-reaching words of our Lord sink deeply into his soul, light up its most hidden recesses, and awaken its dormant powers into life and energy. Realizing thus by direct experience the truth of the Apostle's words that "what things soever were written, were written for our learning,"<sup>1</sup> he leaves to other minds, or reserves at least for other seasons, the pursuit of curious inquiries and the solution of difficult problems, reading meanwhile, as the *Imitation* recommends, "humbly, simply, perseveringly, seeking not what may add to his name, but only what will prove spiritually profitable."

Countless multitudes have read the Scriptures thus, with no preparation but a pure intention and a craving for light and strength, and they have found one and the other, often in greater abundance than those who approached the Sacred Books equipped with all manner of preparatory knowledge, thus verifying afresh the words of our Lord: "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good to Thee."<sup>2</sup>

### III.

Should the devout student, then, confine himself to what springs thus spontaneously from the Bible itself?

By no means. Scripture is like an exuberant soil, putting forth flower and fruit unsolicited, yet rendered incomparably more fertile by careful culture. It is a mine

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Luke x.

which betrays its treasures on the very surface, yet to be dug into that the purest and richest ores may be found. Even the literary beauty of the Sacred Books are fully accessible only through a close knowledge of the text. "I am persuaded," says Goethe, "that the Bible becomes ever more beautiful the more it is understood." Nor is it otherwise in regard to its devotional value. To study it scientifically, it is true, is generally, in its immediate effects, more a hindrance than a help to piety. Science in itself appeals only to the mind, and diverts attention from the soul, which it affects, if at all, but indirectly. Yet in the interest of piety itself, the Bible must be studied scientifically, like any other object of human knowledge. After all, edification must ultimately rest on truth. Scripture is valuable only because it places man's mind in contact with the mind of God. But this it can do only if we understand it aright. To read one's own fancies into the Sacred Text, and then feed one's feelings upon them, may be a pleasing occupation, but it hardly can be considered a profitable one. Some time or other a ray of light dispels the illusion, and what seemed to be built on the word of God is found to rest only on one's own misinterpretation of it. An underlying fallacy of this kind is frequently to be met with in books of devotion, in the shape of a substitution, deliberate or unconscious, of conventional interpretations of Scripture for its genuine, original meaning. The sacred words, with a very definite sense of their own, have been so frequently turned aside from their original meaning to express other thoughts, that they have come to be looked upon as giving special weight and authority to the latter. This, if deliberately brought about, could hardly be considered respectful. God's words were meant to convey divine thoughts, not to accredit human concep-

tions. The true attitude of man when God speaks is that of a reverent listener, intent on gathering in what is spoken, and then doing his utmost to reach its full meaning. Viewed in this light, it may be said that the more thoroughly scientific the study of Scripture is, the more truly religious. At the same time it has to be borne in mind that even a scientific exegesis of the Bible demands a special disposition of soul, a religious spirit which is not needed in the study of any other book. In this respect it resembles moral and social problems, or certain historical questions, into which, to judge them rightly, the whole man has to enter.

It is in this spirit, then, both religious and scientific, that the doctrinal study of the Bible has to be taken up. Its form and direction will depend entirely on the choice of the investigator, for, unlike the Protestant student, his theology, based on the teaching of the Church, is already fixed, and depends more speculatively than practically upon the Sacred Books. Yet in no other way can he see the teachings of his faith in so vivid and clear a light as when he traces them back through the pages of the Old and New Testament. There each divine truth has a history of its own, and nothing is more interesting and instructive than to watch its gradual manifestation through the sacred pages. The idea of God, for instance, as evolved in the Bible, is a magnificent study. So is that of Christ in prophecy. Again, the doctrine of the angels is most curious to follow through the pages of the Old Testament. Every virtue, natural or supernatural, taught in the Bible, lends itself to the same research, — justice, truthfulness, gentleness, mercy, patience, self-denial, reverence, love. The Beatitudes have all their beginnings in the Old Testament, as they have their perfection in the New.

This suggests other lines of investigation, such as that of the growth of moral notions in the Old Testament, or of the general level of moral goodness among the Jews; of the Old Testament ideals of righteousness considered in themselves, and as compared with those of the Gospel, etc. In the New Testament alone a comparative study of its parts from a doctrinal point of view is full of interest, such, for example, as that of the divinity of Christ, of the Incarnation, of the Atonement, as found in each of the Gospels; a doctrinal comparison of the Gospels and the Epistles, showing what they have in common, and what new elements the latter add to the former. In fact, there is not a religious truth, speculative or practical, which may not be studied in this way, even those which reached their full growth only in the Church, inasmuch as they have their roots and incipient forms in the Inspired Writings.

One of the things that help to recommend this manner of study is the fact that it may be pursued almost without the help of a commentary. But a concordance is necessary. One of our greatest modern Biblical scholars, Westcott, tells us that a grammar, a lexicon, and a concordance were of more assistance to him than all the commentaries he could handle. And this is easy to understand; for all that commentators themselves can do, to interpret a passage, is to find out the meaning of the words, in themselves, and as used in the Bible, and to recall the laws of the language in which the passage was originally written.

The value of a concordance for a Biblical student cannot be exaggerated. Unhappily, we have none based on an English Catholic version of the Bible. But those made on the Latin Vulgate are many, excellent, and easily pro-



cured, and those accommodated to the Authorized Version, such as Cruden, Young, etc., can be made available.

Yet commentaries are a practical necessity for the student at every stage of his work, and the very ablest scholars confess themselves deeply indebted to them. The intelligence of the Bible cannot be reached by the independent efforts of any single mind. It must be the result of the accumulated labor of ages, and this is just what is found in commentaries. A good commentary gives the best of what has been thought and said in the past on any book of the Bible. For many centuries there were only "catenæ," or "glossæ," — extracts from the Fathers, gathered round the Sacred Text, and doubtless they were the best helps their compilers could supply at the time. With the renovation of learning new methods prevailed. The acceptance of the Bible as the only rule of faith naturally gave birth to a considerable number of commentaries among Protestants; but Catholic scholars were not idle, and some among them, such as Maldonatus, Estius, Cornelius a Lapide, are still acknowledged as of high authority among Protestant as well as among Catholic students.

Catholic Biblical commentaries are scarce in English, and the reason is easy to find, writings in the vernacular on Biblical subjects having come into fashion after Protestantism had taken possession, as it were, of the English language. The Catholic student is consequently compelled to fall back almost entirely on the older Latin commentaries, and to have recourse to those more recently written in German and in French, several of which are excellent.<sup>1</sup> At the same time he will derive much benefit

<sup>1</sup> Yet we should not fail to mention the valuable commentary of Archbishop McEvilly on the Epistles, or that of Bishop McCarthy on the Gospels. Rev. F. Maas, S.J., opens among ourselves a series full of promise.

from a judicious use of non-Catholic commentaries. Some of them have been written by men of great learning, earnest defenders of fundamental Christian truths, and full of reverence for the Sacred Word. In many of their books scarce anything can be found opposed to Catholic orthodoxy, and if such blemishes be occasionally met, they are as easily recognized and accounted for, and can therefore do little or no harm. Few New Testament students will fail to avail themselves of the conscientious and thorough labors of such men as Alford, Westcott, Lightfoot, Ellicott, Godet, etc., or, if the Old Testament be their chosen field, of the valuable productions of Hengstenberg, Keil, Delitzsch, Lange, and others, many of which have been made accessible in English translations. The *Speaker's Commentary*, published several years ago, contains much that is interesting and valuable; and the *Gnomon* of Bengel, originally written in Latin, in the early years of the last century, but also to be had in English, gives a commentary on the whole New Testament, pithy, devout, and suggestive.

Finally, to keep alive his interest in Biblical studies, the

German Catholic literature abounds in works of this description. We may mention, among others, Hug, Haneberg, Reithmayer, Kaulen, Bickell, etc. France also can boast of excellent work done in these latter years. Lethielloux, the Paris publisher, secured for his commentary on the Old and New Testaments (twenty-eight volumes), some of the best talent of the country. He is now engaged in publishing in Latin an elaborate commentary written by German Fathers of the Society of Jesus. Abbé Fillion, S.S., Professor of Exegesis in the Catholic Institute of Paris, has already published a portion of a brief commentary in French on the Old and New Testaments, besides an excellent commentary on the Gospels. In another department, the various works of Abbé Vigouroux, S.S., — archæological and apologetic, — and still more the Bible Dictionary in course of publication under his direction, and already considered the most complete of its kind in Europe, will prove extremely useful to the Biblical student.

young priest will find nothing more helpful than a review in which new books on the subject are noticed, new discoveries chronicled, problems new or old discussed. Most of the German Catholic periodicals meet this need in some measure, as also our English Catholic reviews. France supplies two publications of this kind which deserve especial mention. We refer to the *Revue Biblique* (quarterly), which is gradually assuming a position of authority among scholars, and the *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuse* (bimensal), containing articles of the greatest value.

#### ARTICLE IV.

##### *THE APOLOGETIC STUDY OF THE BIBLE.*

The last, but not the least important, aspect under which the Bible has to be studied is that of its defense. To rob it of its sacredness, and reduce it to the level of an ordinary product of the human mind, has been at all times the aim of unbelief, but never more so than in the present age. Never, consequently, has it been more necessary that the natural defenders of divine truth should be armed for the contest; that they should have some knowledge, and if possible a thorough knowledge, of the chief points of attack, of the methods of the assailants, and of the tactics by which they may be most effectively repulsed. Indeed, it may be said that the apologetic work of the priest to-day is mainly the defense of the Bible. In the sixteenth century infidelity came with literature; in the eighteenth, with philosophy; in the nineteenth it has come chiefly with Biblical studies. This, therefore, is the field in which the Christian apologist has to concentrate his forces. In

others, occasional battles will have to be fought, — in philosophy, in history, in the physical and moral sciences ; — but the contest in this generation will continue to rage oftenest, longest, and hottest around the books of the Old and the New Testament.

## I.

Attacks on the Bible are nothing new in religious history ; they are almost as old as Christianity itself. Celsus, the philosopher, assailed the Sacred Books in the second century ; the mystic, Porphyry, in the third ; Julian the Apostate, in the fourth ; and these were only the leaders. Their objections, such as we find them reproduced and refuted by Origen, Eusebius, S. Cyril of Alexandria, etc., are much of the same kind. They fix upon what seems contradictory or incredible in the Old and the New Testament, and conclude that the religion which is based upon it is worthless. The strange history of creation, the formation of Adam and Eve, as described in Genesis, the Temptation, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, the story of Jonas, of Daniel, the seeming discrepancies of the Gospels, in fact, almost all the popular objections of to-day, are already to be found in those early writers. The Christians of the period do not seem to have been much concerned about them. It was nearly a hundred years after Celsus had written his *True Discourse*, *Λογος ἀλήθης*, that Origen answered it. Julian's *Discourse against the Christians* elicited several contemporary replies ; but objections and responses soon lost all interest, and disappeared so completely, that nothing of the whole controversy with Julian now remains, outside the refutation to be found among the voluminous writings of S. Cyril of Alexandria.

With the death of the apostate emperor all further op-



position to the Sacred Books practically disappeared ; and for better than a thousand years the Bible became the accepted law of religious thought and life throughout the civilized world. Its difficulties indeed had not disappeared, nor were all minds entirely blind to them. S. Augustine felt he was rendering a practical service when, "to answer the objections of unbelievers, and the questionings of believers whose faith is disturbed," he wrote his remarkable book on the Harmony of the Gospels, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, in which he undertook to prove that no contradiction could be found in their fourfold narrative. Neither was the short book of S. Gregory the Great, *Concordia quorundam terminorum Scæ Scripturæ* without its use, nor the larger work of S. Julian of Toledo, written a hundred years later, *Antikeimenon libri duo*, to explain a considerable number of verbal discrepancies in the Bible. But even these ceased to be needed. The deep reverent spirit which pervaded the following ages forbade men to scrutinize closely the outward aspects of the revealed Word. To demand an explanation of the perplexing problems which they suggested would have looked like a challenge to the Almighty to explain His ways to His creatures, and to refuse submission unless human presumption had first been satisfied.

And so Christians instinctively turned away from such questions as irreverent, unprofitable, and calculated only to weaken their faith, and expose them to the sin of unbelief. They looked up to the Bible, and listened to it with religious awe ; but they dared not look into it and examine it curiously as they might any other book. They gladly learned what the Fathers had said of it ; but outside some new mystical interpretations, they did not venture to indulge in any speculations of their own. Its human ele-

ments and aspects, so much dwelt upon in our time, were not as much as noticed by them, still less the imperfections which the Holy Spirit had allowed to cling to what was mainly His work. On what had come directly from God, mortal man, they thought, should not sit in judgment.

And yet such a judgment was bound to come at one time or another. To humble and unquestioning faith rational inquiry is sure to succeed in every sphere, as soon as the mind, quickened to active thought, perceives problems, old or new, and feels able to handle them. This condition of things came, as regards the Bible, with the Renaissance, and grew with the steady increase of learning and exceptional mental activity which characterized the following ages. Biblical studies had their full share in the general movement. Questions without number came up, and were examined in the full light of the new learning, yet still without any departure from the traditional reverence of the past.

It was only in the eighteenth century, with the advent of Deism, that, after the lapse of so many centuries of universal reverence, the Bible was once again assailed, and had to be defended. In England, in France, in Germany, a host of writers denied its divine character, attacked its doctrines, and questioned its facts. But this assault, though most harmful, was only a preparation for an aggression far more systematic, abiding, and destructive, that of the rationalistic school, which, in various forms and degrees, has steadily widened its operations and strengthened its positions during the whole course of the present century.

It is against this school that the defender of Holy Writ has chiefly to contend in our time, and the task is by no means an easy one. To meet the coarse wit of Toland, or

the polished sarcasm of Voltaire, or the ingenious sophisms of Hume and Rousseau, it was not necessary to be possessed of exceptional learning. Their knowledge of the Bible was superficial; and only a little better knowledge of it, with common sense, sufficed to answer them logically, if not to destroy their power of seduction.

With our rationalists the case is entirely different. They are Bible scholars, specialists, experts, with a perfect knowledge of the Sacred Text, of the language in which it was originally written, of the physical and historical surroundings amid which the events it records are supposed to have happened, of the latest discoveries in the various sciences which can help to understand and appreciate its statements. Their authority, based on these qualifications, is paramount with most of those who give them a hearing; and the number of minds they reach through their lectures and writings, reflected and reëchoed in the literature of the day, is simply countless. How to counteract their influence is the problem to be solved by the apologist.

## II.

To attempt it, his first care must be to become acquainted with the principal aspects and phases of the contest up to the present day. We cannot undertake to follow them up here in detail, but there is room for giving them in general outline.

Two hundred years ago, as we have said, the books of the Old and the New Testament were held in universal veneration. No doubt was entertained of their authenticity. Moses was the unquestioned author of the Pentateuch; Solomon, of the Proverbs; Isaias, Daniel, and the other Prophets, of all that bore their names: the Evangelists and

Apostles of the writings of the New Testament respectively assigned to them. But their principal author was the Holy Ghost, for they were all inspired, and inspired in all their parts. This is what made them invaluable to Christians, their divine origin warranting their perfect inerrancy. "If once we admit error in the Scriptures," said S. Jerome, "what further authority can they possess?" "The whole structure of the faith totters," added S. Augustine, "once the authority of Scripture is shaken," *Titubat fides si divinarum Scripturarum vacillat auctoritas*.<sup>1</sup> His fundamental principle was then that no error could possibly be found in any statement emanating from so sacred a source. This once admitted, it only remained to discern the true meaning of the Inspired Word, and for that S. Augustine again supplied the rule, — "that the literal and obvious sense should not be departed from except only where reason makes it untenable or necessity requires." Under the action of these principles there had sprung up a most elaborate system of belief, extending to everything upon which Scripture seemed to bear. Thus, it was held that the visible universe was made out of nothing about six thousand years ago; that the earth was the immovable centre around which sun, moon, and stars revolve; that all the species of living beings were made as they are found; that the whole history of the creation of Adam and Eve, the Temptation, and the Fall, had to be taken literally; that the waters of the Deluge had covered the whole face of the earth, and destroyed all living things outside what was contained in the ark; that Josue had stayed the sun in its course, etc. These and numberless other particulars of a similar kind, gathered from the Old and New Testament, and believed unhesitatingly for ages,

<sup>1</sup> *De Doctrina Christiana*, Cap. xxxviii.



had become an integral part of the popular faith and of orthodox theology.

But the time came when every one of them was in turn to be scientifically tested, some with fatal effect. Astronomy, first of all, demonstrated that the older conception of the universe was at fault; that the sun, not the earth, is the centre around which the planets, including the earth itself, regularly revolve. Geology came, and showed that the work of creation must have begun at an incalculable distance of ages from us, and that its present condition reveals a process of organization which, instead of a few days, must have gone on for millions of years. Evolution came, and claimed for animals and for man himself an origin entirely different from that described in Genesis; while history, archæology, philology, appealed to in turn, assigned to him a far greater antiquity than was allowed by the chronology of the Bible. Difficulties, old and new, were urged against the story of the Deluge, of the Tower of Babel, of Josue, of Samson, etc. Besides the discrepancies which S. Augustine and others had endeavored to explain away, many others were pointed to which could not be easily disposed of, and which, if admitted, would destroy, it was thought, the claim to inerrancy of the Sacred Books. The books themselves, submitted to a critical examination, seemed to reveal — especially the more important, such as the Pentateuch — an origin much more recent than was supposed, thereby losing the authority, historical or prophetical, which they naturally enjoyed in the earlier hypothesis.

These are some of the difficulties with which apologists have had to contend in modern times, not all together, but in succession, as the new sciences came into existence, and were enlisted in the service of unbelief. Let us now see how it was attempted to meet them.

1. First, as might be expected, the traditional view, being considered obligatory, was defended in all its parts. An attempt was made to show that what was objected was scientifically groundless, or at least not to be compared with the authority upon which the older conception rested or else could be accounted for without sacrificing the traditional beliefs. Endless mathematical calculations were made to prove that there was plenty of water in the ocean and in the air to deluge the world, plenty of room in the ark to accommodate pairs of all living things. Finally, in regard to all such facts, it was observed that nothing is impossible to God, and that, having vouchsafed to tell us what He had done, nothing remained for us but to humbly accept His revealed word.

2. Yet the system had to yield in many points to the pressure of accumulated facts. One after another positions which had been deemed vital were given up. After all, S. Augustine had foreseen such a possibility, and provided for it — (*vel necessitas requirat*). The necessity had come, and the concessions were made — slowly, grudgingly — but they were made. And as S. Augustine again had said, “Whatever they can demonstrate to be true of physical nature we must show to be capable of reconciliation with our Scriptures,” the latter were read afresh, and found susceptible of new and scientific meanings.

This represents the second method or phase of Biblical apologetics. In the former the facts were denied, or accommodated to the letter of the Bible. In the latter the Bible was interpreted in harmony with the facts. Nor did this imply the introduction of any new principle. It had always been understood — though too often forgotten — that God in the Bible accommodates Himself to the minds of men, and follows the laws of their language; that other

meanings besides the literal had, at all times, been admitted in certain cases, and might be admitted in many more when the circumstances required it.

Once introduced and found to work satisfactorily, the process extended rapidly, smoothed down scores of difficulties, and represented for a time a happy alliance of human knowledge and divine faith.

But only for a time. It was soon noticed that, to meet the requirements of science, constructions had to be put on several texts of the Bible which were strained, unnatural, and visibly foreign to the mind of the sacred writers. Besides, while covering many points of difficulty, the system left many more untouched, any one of which would suffice to destroy the claims of the Bible to absolute inerrancy. To meet the ever increasing array of such difficulties, a certain number of apologists were led to fall back on another line of defense.

3. The purpose of God, they said, when he teaches man through revelation, is not to instruct him or to correct his errors as to the things of this world, it is to enlighten him morally and spiritually. In all else he leaves him to his natural resources. In the Inspired Books, therefore, in so far as they convey moral and religious truth, there can be no error. In all else the inspired writer is liable to mistakes, like any other man; nor is there any need for the apologist to explain them away, or to defend them.

Such a conception of inspiration, as extending only to the doctrinal portions of the Sacred Books, is very plausible at first sight. It simplifies wonderfully the task of the apologist, and allows him to take his stand upon a ground on which he is almost unassailable. It has been widely adopted among conservative Protestants, and even some Catholics have been led to give it their assent. But

in so doing they completely abandon a position which was always held in the past. None of the Fathers will listen to the notion of a mistake in any of the sacred writers. "I have so learned to honor and reverence Holy Writ," says S. Augustine, "as firmly to believe that no inspired writer could fall into error: *ut nullum eorum auctorem scribendo aliquid errasse, firmissime credam.*" It is not only in its doctrinal parts that the Bible is inspired, it is integrally and in every portion of it. The Bible does not merely contain the Word of God, it is the Word of God. And this is why Pope Leo XIII., in his recent encyclical on the study of Scripture, formally declares that "those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the Sacred Writings, pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration, and make God the author of such error."

This declaration, though it may not be considered as *ex cathedra*, has sufficed to warn off our Catholic apologists from the dangerous ground which some of them had been momentarily led to occupy. But, while thus adding to the difficulty of their task, the Sovereign Pontiff helped to lighten it in other ways; in particular by pointing to the circumstance that the language of the Bible is popular, not technical, and by accepting all the consequences which follow from such a fact. Nor have they been slow to avail themselves of such a concession. More freely than ever before do we find them admitting in the inspired pages loose and inexact statements, side by side with what is strictly accurate; figurative language of all kinds, metaphors, hyperboles, rhetorical amplifications, facts veiled in poetic forms, seeming narratives which are only allegories or parables, all the ordinary modes of human speech, in a word, and all the literary peculiarities of Eastern peoples.

It is easy to see what pliancy and power of accommoda-



tion is thus imparted to the Sacred Books, and what corresponding facility the apologist finds to extricate himself from otherwise insuperable difficulties. The fundamental position is this: THAT INSPIRATION DOES NOT CHANGE THE ESTABLISHED LITERARY HABITS OF A PEOPLE OR OF A WRITER; that, consequently, what is considered no departure from truth in an ordinary book, should not be viewed otherwise because the book is inspired. It follows that before declaring what seems a literal statement in the Bible to be untrue, it must first be ascertained whether it is meant as a statement of fact at all, and next, if so, to what extent it is meant by the writer, or expected by those for whom he wrote, to be entirely accurate. Thus, to take a well-known example, the number forty applied to a period of days or years did not mean, for a Hebrew writer, or for his readers, that exact measure of time which it represents to the modern mind. In fact, one of the most ordinary sources of difficulties, and of general misapprehension of the ancient Oriental books which constitute nearly the whole Bible, is found to be the habit of interpreting them by our own modern rules and standards. For the errors, — ours, not theirs, — to which this gives rise, surely the sacred writers cannot be made responsible.

By another application of this same principle several of our apologists exonerate from the reproach of error the sacred writers who give divergent accounts of the same fact. They claim that in such cases only substantial accuracy was ever intended or expected, not exactness of detail.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A striking example of the freedom with which facts are handled in Sacred Writ may be seen in the way the incidents following on the Resurrection of Our Lord are presented in the Synoptic Gospels as compared together, and with the account given by S. John.

Or, again, they consider the sacred writers as borrowing their information from the best accessible sources, and giving it faithfully as they found it, without warranting a literal accuracy of which its value was really independent. To put it in general terms, they hold that God in the Bible teaches only what is taught by the sacred writer, and that the latter teaches only what *he means to teach*. So that ultimately the whole question resolves itself into that of the mind of the human author, which has, in turn, to be gathered from the nature of what he writes, the literary methods of his time, etc.

These are only some of the lines on which the defense of the Bible has been, and continues to be, pursued up to the present day. One more may be mentioned as having led to the happiest results. It consists in following our Bible critics over the various fields of research from which they claim to draw their strongest objections, — history, antiquities, philology, etc., — and showing how questionable are many of their facts, and how groundless their conclusions.

### III.

And now, if we would sum up in a few words the result of this lengthened contest, we may say that it has not resulted in a complete victory for either side. Each of the opposing forces has had to give up some of its positions. Hundreds of objections loudly trumpeted for a time have been effectively silenced. Destructive theories, after a short period of popularity, have gradually faded out of sight. Statements put forth at first with unbounded confidence have quietly been dropped, and are no longer heard of. Much had been made of the silence of antiquity around Jewish history. But that silence is broken. From

the hidden monuments of Egypt, of Assyria, and Chaldea, voices have come forth so significant that the main lines of our sacred history are now admitted by all to be true.

On the other hand, many of the older interpretations of the Bible, which were long looked upon as sacred, are given up by Catholics and Protestants alike; nor does the process of evolution seem to be at an end. Each decade is marked by notable concessions, made reluctantly or readily according to the tendencies of individuals and of schools; for, whilst all unite in defending the Sacred Books, there is much difference of opinion as to what has to be defended in connection with them. There is the conservative school, more disposed to cling to the past, and the broad, progressive school, as we might call it, more alive to the facts and exigencies of the present. Indeed, as regards individuals, the title is necessarily relative, the same person being progressive in regard to those he leaves behind, and conservative compared with those more advanced whom he does not choose to follow. The new views thus gradually adopted owe their origin so far almost entirely to the rationalistic school, from which they were borrowed by the more advanced, and gradually came to be accepted by the more conservative section of Protestants. It is mostly through the writings of the latter that they have gained recognition among Catholics. Their Catholic adherents are chiefly to be found among Biblical students, the opposite tendency being commonly represented by theologians. This means that the general principles of theology seem to lead in one direction, and the facts in another. The principles have been forcibly recalled by Leo XIII. in his recent Encyclical; yet it is a remarkable fact that our Biblical students, while professing the most entire submission to his teachings, have never

been bolder in their speculations, and in the handling of what had hitherto been looked upon in the Bible as literal history, than since the Encyclical was issued. Thus, to confine ourselves to a few examples, the freedom of interpretation generally admitted already with regard to the first chapter of Genesis is now claimed and practically assumed in dealing with the contents of the ten following chapters. The Deluge, in particular, whose waters are said, in the narrative of Genesis, to have covered the whole face of the earth, and risen fifteen cubits above all the high mountains under the heavens, is reduced to the proportions of a local inundation swallowing up only a portion of animal or even of human life. In the same way the plagues of Egypt are cut down by some to the size of ordinary events providentially disposed to subserve a divine purpose; the miracle of Josue to a poetic description of a natural phenomenon, etc. In a word, what assumes a historical form in the Bible is admitted in one case as a true record of facts; in another, as a conventional or fanciful presentation of what happened; in another, again, as a fiction destined, like the parables of the Gospel, to embody and convey some salutary truth. There are those who to the last category assign such books as Job, Judith, Tobias, to which some are half disposed to add Jonas. Several are quite ready to admit different narratives of the same event, which, read literally, cannot be reconciled, and even "duplicates," or double narratives of the same fact, in the same book, which cannot be adjusted together.

Finally, the date and authorship of the books of the Old and the New Testament they look upon as open to free discussion, and bound to stand on their own merits. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, almost universally rejected by the highest Biblical authorities, and even by



many of the most "orthodox" Protestant teachers, is being gradually questioned among Catholic scholars. These are extreme positions, and are far from winning the approval of all; yet they are openly assumed; they are favored by some of our ablest Catholic scholars; they have been one of the salient features of the last Catholic Congress in Fribourg; and our best-known Catholic organs, in England, in France, in Germany, ventilate them freely.

#### IV.

From all this it is easy to gather what an arduous and complicated task is set before the Biblical apologist of the present day. One of his principal difficulties, in a period of transition like the present, is to discern, among the positions held in the past, which he is bound to hold at any cost, which he may abandon if hard pressed, which he should not waste time in defending. In the next place, most of the objections he has to face are the outcome of special knowledge, and can be met directly only by those who have pursued the same lines of study; yet no single individual can compass them all, nor indeed are such studies equally suited to all. To some they bring light and peace; to others they are only a source of perplexity and unrest. Yet so long as they are necessary to meet the questionings of many minds, they have to be taken up and pursued by those to whom the care of others has been entrusted. The special direction to pursue will naturally be determined by the needs which have to be met, such as they may be learned by direct intercourse with those who are perplexed or troubled, or be gathered from their surroundings, the books they read, etc. Already, by his general culture and by his special seminary training, the young priest is able

to dispose of most of them. But he has to complete his knowledge, and keep abreast of the progressive movement of the day.<sup>1</sup> Just now most things connected with the Bible are in a state of transition and transformation. Scarce is one difficulty answered, or dropped as worthless, when another crops up. New views are set forth in endless succession. It is well to know something of them, but there is no need to be concerned about them. Most of them speedily vanish, and the others may be left to specialists. It is time enough to attend to them when they have got a solid footing among competent judges. Much of what we read in newspapers and reviews of discoveries bearing on the Bible is worked up for sensational effect, and collapses as quickly as it has come into notice. To be anxious even about what is destined to remain would argue in the apologist little faith in the cause he defends. Far from dreading genuine discoveries, he should rather welcome them, with the conviction that all partial truths cannot but tend to elucidate and to sustain fundamental truths, human or divine.

One of the benefits of the knowledge thus got will be to rid the apologist of the temptation to substitute wholesale

<sup>1</sup> Through the medium of the press one may keep track of the principal things that come to light in connection with the Bible. Most of our Catholic reviews mention them. They have long been a feature of the *Catholic Quarterly*, and quite recently they have become an additional attraction in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Fuller information will naturally be found in special organs, such as the *Biblical World* (monthly), of Chicago University or the *Revue Biblique* (quarterly), Paris, or, again, the *Biblische Studien*, of Fribourg.

As regards the older difficulties, the student may be referred to the numerous apologetical works of the last and present century, such as Veith, IV. Vol. of Migne's *Curs. Compl.*, or the recent book of Abbé Vigouroux, *Les livres saints et la critique rationaliste*, or Kaulen (German), *Introduction to the Sacred Scripture*.

vituperation for facts and arguments. He will learn that if there was a time when assaults on the Bible were made by men whose personal character was such that reference to it was a sufficient answer, and if individual cases of the kind are still to be met with, they are now the exception. Among our most dangerous opponents he will find men of high principle, sincere, fair-minded, and to whom Biblical science is indebted in many ways. He will learn, too, that it can serve no useful purpose to indulge in indiscriminate denunciation of higher criticism and other lines of study which have led to unwelcome results. All are legitimate in their way, necessary, in fact, for a thorough study of the Bible. They may be used, and are used, for constructive as well as for destructive purposes. But as abuse of them has been common, their applications have to be closely watched.

To conclude. From what we have said it may be seen that, underlying most of the difficulties with which the Biblical apologist has to contend, is the question of Inspiration. It is as an inspired book, with all that is necessarily implied in this quality, that the Bible has to be sustained. That it is an inspired book is an article of faith; but what is implied thereby has never been defined, nor, perhaps, can it be defined, except by approximation. Hence the controversies which have arisen on the subject in our times, within as well as without the Church. As we have already remarked, theologians generally go in one direction, Biblical scholars in another. The tendency of the former is to widen, of the latter to narrow, the effects or necessary consequences of inspiration, and the difference for the apologist may be considerable. Even when all are agreed on certain principles, the same divergencies reappear in the manner of applying them. Thus, even if it be admitted

that every statement in the Bible is necessarily true, the question still remains: what is really meant as a statement by the sacred writer, and what is not, — a question which, with the new views held as to the methods of the sacred writers, and not easily disproved, leaves room for an honest difference of opinion in numberless cases.

And, for this reason, and because of all the work that has been done on the Bible in recent times, with results which are no longer seriously questioned, theologians have to acknowledge, however reluctantly, that henceforth much less can be built on the Bible than has been done in the past. This is a consequence which many believing Protestants perceive with dismay. Catholics can afford to contemplate it with perfect equanimity. Their faith is based, not on the Bible, but on the Church. The living Spirit of God is not in the Bible, but in the Church, and for all time. She may seem to depend on the Bible for her knowledge, and as a fact the Spirit has largely guided and enlightened her through the Bible; but she is not dependent on the Bible for anything that is essential; and even if, by an impossible hypothesis, the inspired writings proved to be nothing more than a book of merely human origin, yet in her definitions and in her solemn teaching she would always be divinely led to single out in it and proclaim only what is absolutely true. With this assurance the Catholic student may watch serenely the course of Biblical investigation going on around him. He may share in it to the full extent of his abilities and mental equipment without any misgiving. He may even venture farther in certain directions than a conscientious and consistent Protestant will dare to go. With his hand held fast in the hand of the Church, he treads the most perilous paths with a sense of perfect safety.



## CHAPTER XIII.

*THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH.*

AFTER the inspired pages of the Bible, there is no source of knowledge to which the clerical student has to turn more frequently, or from which he may expect to derive more profit, than the writings of the Fathers, and in general the literature of the early Church. Almost every one of his special studies leads him back to it, as we have seen in the course of the present volume. But there is such a thing as taking up these ancient writings and making a direct, consecutive study of them, — or a series of studies, — as is done with the Bible; and it will be the object of this, our concluding chapter, to help the student in so profitable and so pleasant a task.

## ARTICLE I.

*ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF PATRISTIC LITERATURE.*

The teaching of our Lord and of the Apostles was primarily oral, in conformity with the traditional custom of the Jewish rabbis; yet most of it soon came to be written in various shapes, and specially in that of the memoirs, narratives, letters, etc., which compose the New Testament. In the same way those who succeeded to the work of the Apostles, while continuing to transmit the divine message chiefly by word of mouth, according to the directions of

S. Paul to Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me . . . the same commend to faithful men who shall be fit to teach others also,"<sup>1</sup> were nevertheless, from the very nature of the case, often led to put their instructions into writing. Only thus, for example, could they reach their absent brethren with admonition or exhortation, or maintain ostensibly the bond of union between the churches, or reply to the attacks of those who assailed or misrepresented their faith. Again, the fearless confession of the martyrs, their superhuman endurance of torture, their beautiful utterances in presence of death, and the deep impression made by such scenes on those who beheld them, all would naturally be recorded and treasured. The sacred doctrine itself, which the writings of the Apostles were never meant to convey in its integrity, and which, even when expressed by them, still remained undeveloped, was like a divine leaven in Christian minds, stirring up a world of new thoughts, which found their natural expression in writings of various kinds. The whole Bible, become the daily spiritual food of souls, called for interpretation and comment. The very life of the churches, inward and outward, their growth and institutions, their trials, their reverses, their triumphs, could not fail to be chronicled, and to be communicated from each Christian community to the others.

In this way there arose in the Church, from the very beginning, a literature which every successive period was destined in some measure to enrich,—a spontaneous growth of narratives, annals, letters, discussions, decisions, apologies, controversies, treatises doctrinal and moral, homilies and commentaries on the Sacred Text. They come forth in succession, almost always in response to some

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 2.

present need, and without any sequence or logical order. For obvious reasons they were fewer in number while the Church was still weak, as also in times of violent, widespread persecution. But when peace, at length was officially restored, and the weight of the imperial power thrown in with the Christian cause, the literary activity of believers, being free to expand, spread itself out, as might be expected, in every direction, through a period of years, until it had spent its energies, or was lost in the chaos which followed on the barbarian and Mussulman invasions.

It is with this early period of the Church's intellectual life, as exhibited in the writings of her children, that we are presently concerned. No distinct line marks its end, but it is commonly considered as extending to the death of S. Gregory the Great (A.D. 604) in the Latin Church, and to that of S. John Damascene (A.D. 755) in the East. It naturally divides itself into two sections: that of the Ante-Nicene, and that of the Post-Nicene Fathers. The former contains already productions of great variety and of much value, as we shall see, but not to be compared with the literary wealth of the latter. Nor, indeed, was the Post-Nicene period equally prolific, or bright in all its parts. A little more than a century includes almost all its great names, — Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Leo, in the West; Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Ephrem, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, besides the historians, Eusebius, Theodoret, Socrates, and Sozomen, in the East.

Various causes helped to gather such a brilliant galaxy of writers into so narrow a space. It was a time, as we have said, of reactive expansion, following upon centuries of repression and constraint. It was a time, besides, when Christian doctrine had matured in the mind of the

Church, and could be set forth with especial accuracy and power. It was a time of widespread and refined culture, in which the exponents of the Gospel truths abundantly shared, the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries being unquestionably the deepest thinkers, the subtlest dialecticians, the most graceful and persuasive orators, of their age. Finally, their manifold gifts were all drawn forth to answer the questionings and to meet the errors, plausible and seductive, of their times. It is a remarkable fact that, within that hundred years, nearly all the metaphysical difficulties connected with the Christian faith were raised for the first time, or recalled and urged, by men of keen and subtle mind,—the Trinity of persons in the Godhead,—the problems that gather around the person of Our Lord,—the mysteries of Predestination, of Grace, of Original Sin. But the teachers of the period were equal to the occasion; and never, before or since, were the leading truths of the faith more accurately defined, or more happily illustrated, nor its obscurities and its depths more thoroughly explored, than in the writings of these great men. This of itself was sufficient to win for them the authority they enjoyed in subsequent ages; but other causes besides acted still more powerfully in the same direction: the comparative nearness of the Fathers,—especially of the more ancient,—to the Apostles and to Christ Himself; the personal holiness of the chief among them; the ostensible sanction given them by the Church, because in their teachings she recognized the fullest and most adequate expressions of her own thoughts.

To these causes may be added one more, the marked inferiority of the period that followed on what is called “The Golden Age of the Fathers.” Whatever the reason, their extraordinary gifts seem to have departed from the



world with them. After S. Cyril of Alexandria (A.D. 444) we find in the Greek writers little beyond rhetorical amplifications. The successors of S. Augustine in the West, while not entirely devoid of originality, can hardly be said to have opened up any new lines of thought. Their works, though useful in many ways, reflect the general decline of the period, and are only occasionally lifted above the common level by such men as S. Isidore of Seville or S. Gregory the Great.

But the ascendancy of the Fathers over the subsequent life of the Church is too great to be passed over in general terms; we have to consider it, at least in its leading features.

## ARTICLE II.

### *DEEP AND ABIDING INFLUENCE OF THE FATHERS.*

#### I.

*First Period* — From S. Gregory to S. Anselm. — A period of exceptional intellectual barrenness, easily accounted for by historians. S. Isidore, who may be said to open it, is chiefly a learned compiler, already setting the example, so closely followed in the next four or five centuries, of looking exclusively to the past for all knowledge and all inspiration. That this was the prevailing tone of mind during that long lapse of years is felt at once by whoever looks, even superficially, into the productions of the time. A sense of the inferiority of the present as compared with the past shows itself everywhere. All is decided by authority, and next to the authority of the Bible stands that of "the Fathers." In fact, the Fathers became a sort of second Bible, more complete and more intelligible than the

first, and henceforth it is only through them that the Sacred Text itself is read and interpreted. Most of the commentaries are borrowed literally from them. Not only the *Glossæ* and the *Catenæ* but the exegetical writings of the time do little more than reproduce their thoughts and their very words. Even such men as Bede will hardly venture beyond. In the preface to his commentary on S. Luke, he claims as his principal merit to have simply woven together the *ipsissima verba* of the great Latin Fathers. The chief concern of Alcuin is to say nothing out of harmony with them: *Cautissimo stylo providens ne quid contrarium Patrum sensibus ponerem*. The *Glossa ordinaria* of Walafrid Strabo (A.D. 849), which was the standard of interpretation right through the Middle Ages, was nothing but a compilation of patristic texts; and the great light of mediæval, and indeed of all subsequent times, S. Thomas, saw no better way of elucidating the Gospels than to form a *Catena* of excerpts taken from the Greek and Latin Fathers.

Thus it may be said that the early Middle Ages literally lived on what they gathered from their ancestors in the faith. The Fathers remained the ever-shining lights, to which not only individuals but councils, local and general, turned for guidance in their deliberations. It is on the strength of their teaching, and by a close examination of their very words, that the later Eastern ecumenical councils reached their decisions, as may be seen in the records of their proceedings; indeed, the first Council of Chalcedon had already laid it down as a rule, not only to keep at whatever cost the faith of the Fathers, but also to defend that same faith by their authority: *Ut Sanctorum Patrum fidem servemus, iisque utamur testibus ad nostræ fidei firmitatem*.

Nor was their weight less felt in the sphere of moral conduct. Where positive rules were wanting, bishops, in their judicial and administrative acts, were wont to borrow them from the maxims of the Fathers ; and it is thus that we so frequently find them side by side with the decisions of popes and the enactments of councils in the *Decretum* of Gratianus, the very groundwork of canon law.

## II.

*Second Period* — The Schools. — Scholastic theology itself, so largely built at a later period on reason and deductive argument, had its first foundations laid on patristic authorities. It began, we may say, in its organized shape with the *Sentences* of Petrus Lombardus ; extracts from the Fathers, which he arranged under the heads of his vast theological synthesis.<sup>1</sup>

In the great scholastic movement which followed, the Fathers lost nothing of their hold on the reverence and trust of the Christian mind. What is known of them

<sup>1</sup> As might be expected, these treasures of sacred knowledge were very unequally drawn upon during that lengthened period. The more ancient fathers, — Clement, Ignatius, Hermas, and even Irenæus, Justin, and Tertullian, seem to have been little known, if at all, in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, nearly all the writings of the great Latin doctors, SS. Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory, were accessible and familiar to the learned, as well as many others of lesser fame. From an early date some of the Greek Fathers came to be known in the West. Rufinus translated many of them into Latin. Others soon followed, and the work was taken up afresh, and vigorously pursued in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This accounts for their not unfrequent quotation by S. Thomas in the *Summa*, especially the works known under the name of S. Dionysius the Areopagite, with which he was evidently very familiar. The Greek Fathers in his *Catena* are at least as numerous, though not as freely drawn upon, as those of the Latin Church.

is constantly referred to by theologians and ascetical writers as weighted with something more than human authority. Yet we believe that they were less read than before, owing to the new methods of study introduced by the schoolmen. But any neglect they may have sustained during that period was abundantly compensated in the following ages.

### III.

*Modern Era.*—The influences which transformed the world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,—the decline of scholasticism, the revival of classical learning, the knowledge of the Greek tongue and of its treasures, spread through Europe after the fall of Constantinople; above all, the art of printing, which made accessible to so many what had hitherto been only within the reach of a few,—all led to a cultivation and a diffusion of patristic literature such as the world had never witnessed before. Nor was the Protestant Reformation without its influence on the movement; for, in the controversies that arose as to the meaning of Scripture, it was only natural that the sense of the early ages of Christianity should be appealed to, and the writers of these primitive times studied with special care. Theology itself once more became largely patristic. “Positive Theology,” as it was called, placed itself side by side with scholastic speculations and deductions in the works of the sixteenth century, and in a great measure superseded them in those of the following age. The great theologians of the seventeenth century are nearly all patristic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During this same period, for reasons easily imagined, the study of the Fathers was commonly neglected among Protestants, the only exception being found in the Anglican Church, a section of which continued faithful



But at no time have the early Christian writings been so widely read or so closely scrutinized as at the present day, and this by Protestants and Catholics, by believers and unbelievers alike. The age, as we have often remarked, is turned towards history, and the movement, which covers nearly the whole century, shows no signs of weakening at its close. There are three things, in particular, regarding which historical students exhibit a curiosity, greater, if possible, than ever: *origins*, — that is, the earliest beginnings of opinions, beliefs, institutions, customs, etc.; *evolution*, or their gradual development and transformations; finally, *true color*, or the individual characters and conditions of each period. It is easy to see the interest of these questions as applied to Christianity; for even those who do not recognize in it a divine message are none the less compelled to look upon it as the greatest factor of human history. To believers they are all-important. But only through the early documents can they be answered, and so to them all instinctively turn. This is what gives their especial importance and interest to the "Apostolic Fathers," and causes them to be so eagerly discussed. It is felt on all sides that the religion taught by Christ and the Apostles can hardly have been different in any important particular from what was held by men who followed so closely upon them, and professed to be entirely guided by their teachings. Nor is the interest by any means confined to the first witnesses and exponents of the primitive faith. It extends, though in a lesser degree,

to many ancient Catholic beliefs, and rejoiced to find them supported by the most authorized witnesses of the ancient faith. The reader need scarce be told that it is by following them up closely that so many distinguished members of that same Church have been led to the Catholic faith within the last fifty years.

to the later writers of the second, and to all those of the third century, and finally embraces the whole period of patristic literature.

Slowly but deeply this great movement is making itself felt in Catholic theology. As a science, it is becoming more and more historical, and the mind of the past is no longer gathered from scattered fragments, but from a complete knowledge of the documents. The true meaning of the Fathers themselves is looked for, not in the meagre extracts of former days, but in a general study of their views, and through a more correct understanding of their vocabulary. Each doctrine is traced forward in its developments, and backward to its source, and what scholars might have accepted at second hand in other times, they are now expected to look up for themselves.

### ARTICLE III.

#### *THE STUDY OF THE FATHERS.*

##### I.

We are thus led to add one more to the many subjects of study which claim a share in the life of a priest. Something of the Fathers, as we have seen, he is sure to learn in many connections. But the knowledge of them got through the elements of Church history, or of dogmatic, ascetic, or moral theology, is necessarily very fragmentary and very limited. Now we believe that, already in our seminaries, notwithstanding the crowded condition of the courses, it might be somewhat enlarged, and in the following manner:

1. Certain shorter works of the Fathers might be read by the more gifted students in connection with the differ-

ent questions they have to study. Thus, for example, one or other of the *Apologies* of S. Justin, of Tertullian, of Athenagoras, of Minutius Felix, could easily be connected with the *Demonstratio Christiana*. Side by side with the *Tractatus de Ecclesia*, room could be found for S. Cyprian's tract, *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, Tertullian's *Prescriptions*, and Vincentius Lirinensis' *Commonitorium*. The study of the Trinity and of the Incarnation would present a most favorable occasion to become acquainted with the dogmatic letters of S. Leo, or with some of the works of S. Athanasius, such as his *Discourses against the Arians*, or his book, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*; or, again, with some of the dogmatic *Orationes* of S. Gregory Nazianzen, or the *Oratio Catechetica* of S. Gregory of Nyssa, or something of his illustrious brother, S. Basil. The study of Predestination and Grace would lead directly to S. Augustine, and that of the Sacraments to the *Catacheses* of S. Cyril of Jerusalem, and to various short writings of S. Ambrose.

These are only examples. Others of a similar kind might be adduced in connection with moral as well as with dogmatic theology, many of its problems having been discussed by the Fathers, and many of its rulings borrowed from them. As for the study of the Bible, it may be said that it leads back to them at every step, to their principles, to their methods of interpretation, to their numberless expositions of the Sacred Text.

2. But, it may be asked, should nothing more be done? Will it suffice to lead up willing minds to this abundant source of sacred knowledge, and then leave them to draw from it whatever they can? If the guidance of a master is deemed necessary to clerics in every other branch of their studies, should it be denied them here? Put in

these general terms, the question answers itself. Surely some sort of introduction, some sort of guidance, is necessary for those who venture on the broad ocean of patristic lore. But it may be given in various ways:—

1. As a department or offshoot of church history.

2. Informally, by the professors of the different courses, — of history, of scripture, of theology, — in connection with which a study of any of the Fathers is recommended. Indeed, it is always a pleasing variety to listen to the remarks of a teacher on the characteristic features or special merits of any work, ancient or modern, he deems proper to recommend.

3. As a regular course of lectures. Such a course has been established, under the name of Patrology, in many Catholic schools of Europe, especially in Germany, with the result of supplying several excellent Manuals of Introduction to the Study of the Fathers. But teachers capable of covering with competence so vast a field are not found everywhere; and, even where they may be had, the lack of time makes it a serious difficulty to add on a special course, which, besides, if all must be said, many would be either unfit or reluctant to follow. In other words, a course of patrology is more a university than a seminary course; and, if introduced among elementary studies, we believe that it should be confined to a limited number of students.

## II.

But, in one shape or another, it is well that, before entering on his duties, the young priest should have formed some kind of direct acquaintance with the Fathers. Even a taste of them may beget a taste for them; and such a liking, if it lasts, will bring with it countless benefits.



But, even if the opportunity had been denied him in the course of his training, he can make up for it at any time. The Fathers are always accessible; and he may actually comfort himself with the thought that, at the end of his course, or after a little experience of the ministry, he is in a better condition to understand and to enjoy them than in an earlier and less mature condition of mind. They may come a little strange to him at first, and require a special effort, but the difficulty is soon overcome, and the door henceforth remains always open to welcome him.

To come to particulars: —

1. If the works mentioned above in connection with the study of theology have not been looked into, for one reason or another, during the seminary course, they might be taken up with great advantage by young priests in the general revision they are wont to make of their principal studies during the years which follow their ordination.

2. We have had occasion elsewhere to refer to the Fathers as sources of ascetic doctrine. In that respect they are inexhaustible, as they are invaluable. There is in them a freshness of conception, a clearness of view of the Gospel teachings, a directness of statement, which can scarce be found anywhere else. In reading them one feels one's self sensibly nearer the divine source itself of spiritual light. Priests get tired of spiritual books. Let them try for a while S. Cyprian or S. Ambrose. Let them read the letters of S. Augustine, of S. Jerome, of S. Gregory the Great, or the *Ascetica* of S. Basil, — to say nothing of so many others not less commendable, — and we venture to predict that they will not be soon tempted to put aside so substantial and so palatable a nutriment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We should not forget to mention here the *Vitæ Patrum* which so many Christian ages have read with delight, and which, down to the pres-

3. It is the constant concern of priests to find matter and inspiration for their sermons. The Fathers are full of both. But they must be read thoughtfully, and more as a general preparation than for any special subject. The sermons of S. Augustine read thus, or the homilies of S. Chrysostom, or of S. Basil, or most of the writings of Tertullian and of S. Cyprian, will be found to supply, not indeed ready-made sentences and paragraphs, but what is infinitely better, an illuminating and elevating influence, suggesting to the preacher what it is fitting to say, and imparting the power to say it forcibly and effectively.

### III.

A practical difficulty has doubtless occurred more than once to the reader. "Why," he will say, "dilate on the value of a study the materials of which are beyond the reach of any but a few? The Fathers may be very beautiful and very helpful, but I do not and cannot possess them." The difficulty is real, yet not perhaps as insuperable as it is supposed to be. We have certainly got far beyond the age when S. Thomas, as we are told, being

ent, exerts such a fascination on the most cultivated minds. We may also recall the words of Archbishop Vaughan, in his *Life of S. Thomas* (II. 234): "What better spiritual reading could a Catholic ecclesiastic select than the lives of the great Fathers of the Church, or than their ascetical writings, or even, in some instances, than their polemical ones? To master the life of one of these great giants—S. Athanasius, for instance, or S. Basil, or S. Gregory, or S. Ambrose—is to possess a new standard of life, to measure human life by a new rule, to discover the principle of greatness in the saints, as well as the origin of their vast energy, generosity, and singleness of purpose. While they shame us they elevate us; and we close the book glad that such men should have lived on earth, for they remain as lasting patterns of hard work and heroic devotedness. So grandly human, so perfectly divine, they are model men for all ages of the world."

shown Paris for the first time, declared that he would give it all for S. Chrysostom's commentary on the Gospel of S. Matthew. The art of printing has brought the Fathers nearer and nearer to us all, and the most desirable have become the most accessible. Thus the *Confessions* of S. Augustine, the *Pastoral* of S. Gregory, the *Priesthood* of S. Chrysostom, are small books, to be had almost anywhere, in the original or translated. Critical editions of the *Apostolic Fathers* by Héfele, Funk, Harnack, Lightfoot, have succeeded one another these latter years, and several popular editions in English have followed. A single volume contains them all, and it is one we might expect to find in any priest's library.

Neither are the others referred to so very difficult to find. We see them often advertised in booksellers' catalogues at a very low rate, the Greek authors almost always with a Latin translation. More than that, a considerable number of the Fathers were translated into English, and published in Oxford during the Tractarian movement, under the name of the *Ante-Nicene* and *Post-Nicene Library*; while another series, somewhat different, appeared some time later in Edinburgh, and was reprinted a few years ago in this country, with annotations, it is true, of the kind that might have been expected from the editor, Bishop Coxe of Buffalo.

Finally, the learned professor of Innsbruck, H. Hurter, S. J., has published, in connection with his *Dogmatic Theology*, a series of writings of the Fathers in forty-four small volumes, to be had separately at a low price, under the name of *Opuscula SS. PP. selecta*, making them accessible to students and priests alike.

But what has done incomparably more than aught else to bring the Fathers within the reach of a great number is

the colossal publication of Abbé Migne, which appeared towards the middle of the present century. Under the names of *Patrologia Latina* and *Patrologia Græca*, it contains, not only the works of the Fathers, Greek and Latin, but those of all the other ecclesiastical writers, besides a number of contemporaneous documents and fragments of extreme interest to scholars. But there is much more in it than these ancient writers. It includes introductions, discussions, elucidations, etc., the outcome of a vast amount of labor, chiefly critical, expended on these venerable documents during the space of two or three hundred years.

To understand the value of such a collection, we must remember that the first printed editions of the Fathers were very imperfect, taken often from faulty manuscripts, and almost inextricably mixed up with spurious productions which for centuries had been held as genuine. Some of the most important came slowly to light, and had to win their way to general recognition. The invaluable letters of S. Ignatius, martyr, for instance, became known only in the seventeenth century, and the discussions they gave rise to have extended to our own time.

Hence a threefold task awaited the learned editors of a subsequent period:—

1. To separate on scientific principles the authentic writings of each one of the Fathers from those which had been unduly or questionably ascribed to him, while ordinarily preserving the latter in the form of an appendix, because valuable in many ways.

2. To compare the available manuscripts of each work, scattered through the great libraries of Europe, and by the laws of textual criticism to determine the best readings.

3. To give the literary history of each writer, the characteristics of his mind and of his style, the date, ascertained



or probable, of each one of his writings, his influence on the course of subsequent thought, the problems his views or statements give rise to, introductions, indexes, etc. Such an endless amount of labor, extending to thousands of works, was of course beyond the grasp of any single man or of any single body of men. It was carried out almost entirely by the joint learning and energy of the Catholic clergy, secular and regular, the latter assuming the principal part of the work. Dominicans, Jesuits, Oratorians, took a noble share in it; but their names in this particular are almost entirely overshadowed by that of the Benedictines, whose great scholars accomplished as much as all the others put together.

It is the fruit of all these labors that Migne assembled in his tomes, unattractive, it may be, in appearance, but easy to handle, and offered at a price that has enabled thousands of scholars to possess the treasures of Christian antiquity, from the first to the thirteenth century, with a completeness of which hitherto the richest libraries of Europe could not boast.

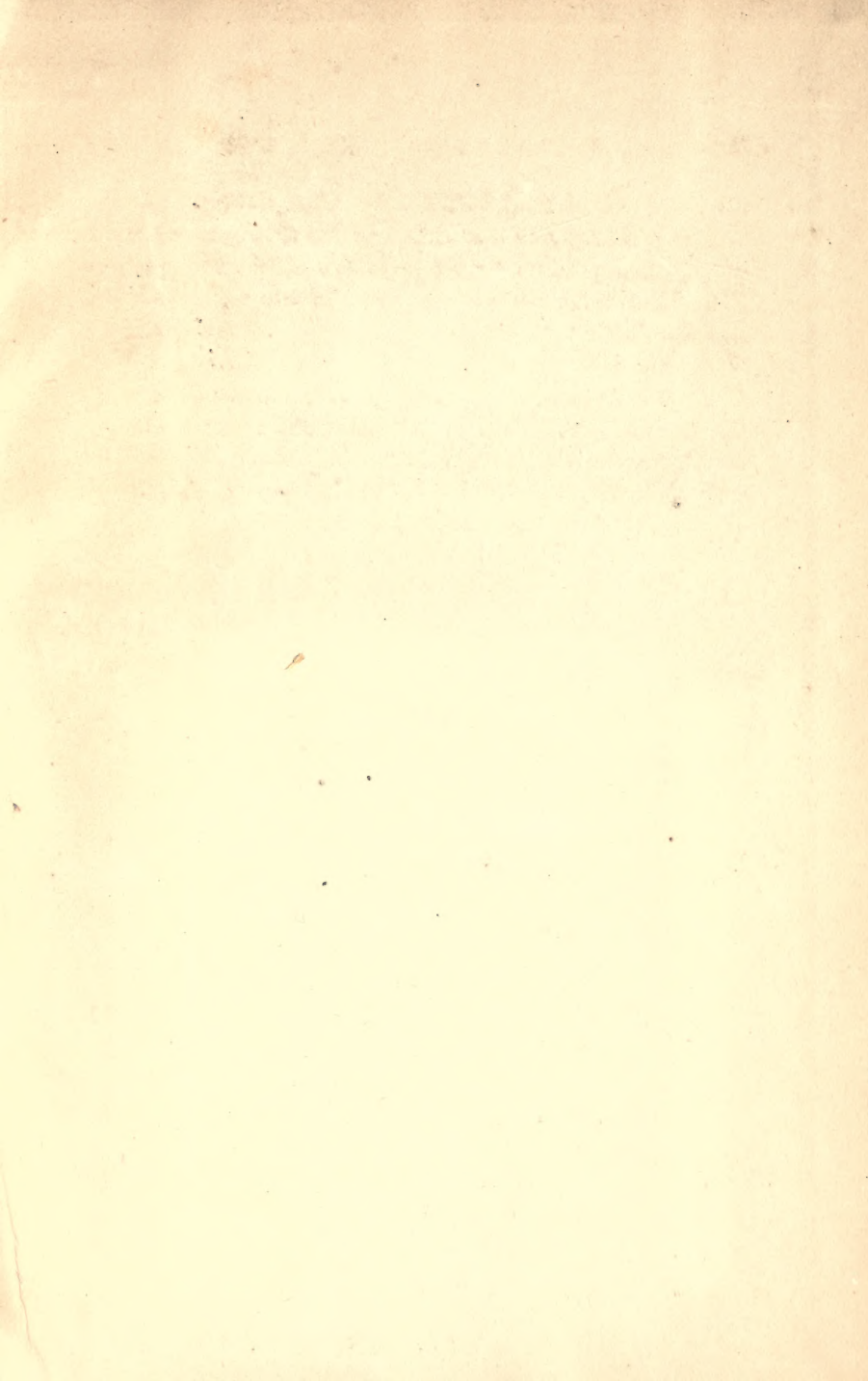
The best introduction to them will be found in the recent edition of the Benedictine, Dom Ceillier's *Auteurs Sacrés et Ecclésiastiques* (eighteen volumes), or in Fessler's *Institutiones Patrologiæ* (two volumes). Each in its way is invaluable as giving a key to all the writings of ecclesiastical antiquity, and as facilitating research in their countless pages.

This chapter closes the series of subjects which it was our purpose to place before the clerical reader. As has been seen, each of them considered separately has its individual interest; each has its special claims on the atten-

tion and industry of the student. Like fertile fields they spread themselves out one after another, inviting and full of promise. But, while offering to the passer-by their spontaneous growth, they reserve their most nutritious and exquisite fruit for the toiler. Only by assiduous and lengthened work can the most valuable results be reached in any department of mental cultivation, and religious subjects are no exception to the rule. At the same time we have no hesitation in thinking that there are few aspirants or young priests who might not, if they chose, strike out in some special direction, and by a judicious use of their leisure hours, reach in it, after some years, a position of competence and authority both creditable to themselves and helpful to the cause of religion.

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